

THE
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AN IMPERIAL CAREER.

BY HORACE ST. JOHN.

SIXTY-FIVE years ago a thunder of artillery told the world that an heir had been born to the fortunes or misfortunes of the most wonderful man since Cæsar. He is not to be compared with Cæsar, or with Charlemagne, but he filled a splendid space in his epoch, and his achievements have impressed a stamp upon its history which neither time nor spite can efface. No 'child of love,' but 'born in bitterness,' his very childhood was a fugitive one, surrounded by doubts, suspicions, and ambiguities. His mother, Hortense, a heroine, a beauty, and a sister of charity when she pleased, taught him early the lessons of pride and power, and assuredly no man ever seemed further from the reach of both, and no man ever wielded his sway with more consummate skill. His birth took place in a palace—the proudest palace in Europe—others say in the Rue Lafitte—the golden bees swarmed about his cradle, and the purple covered his cot. In default of a direct successor, the great statesman and warrior, glorified by Austerlitz, and ruined by Waterloo, adopted this child to be the bearer of his name, his title, and his power. His own career, however, from the day when he stood blushing like a girl in the presence of Marie Antoinette to that on which his 'star' was eclipsed by the triple legions of Leipsic, was not more full of vicissitudes than that of his nephew—now the superior of kings and cardinals, now the patron of a pope, now, not to employ the term in any insulting sense, a vagrant sleeping on a heap of stones in the street; then, almost

suffocated by fever in an Austrian camp; afterwards a common soldier and a most uncommon rebel; and, as a climax, clasping a dearly beloved brother dead in his arms, wandering sick, even hungry, morose, and melancholy, condemned to a dungeon for life, escaping through the means of an English passport as an outlaw, coming over among us to write papers on pauperism and sugar, taking part in the magnificent follies of the Eglintoun Tournament, and then rising to revenge himself on fate by standing highest among the high amidst the monarchs of the earth.

The education of this youth, while yet a child, was severe, and yet tender; but there was in the disposition of his mother a kind of austerity, not preventing her from loving him, which may perhaps partly account for his taciturnity in later years. It is immeasurably to his credit, however, that he never failed to do justice to her affection, or to remember those whom she had made the objects of her benevolence. But the story of that time is a short one. At six years of age the 'star' became a planet and wandered; half of Europe was tramping on the roads to Paris; Hortense fled, and Maria Louise made her disgraceful escape to Vienna, where not long after, to her shame as a woman, and her disgrace as a wife, she danced with the Duke of Wellington. The next period in the younger life of Louis Napoleon takes us to the Chateau of Navarre, where, residing with his mother, he was regarded by the Bourbons as not a dangerous Bonaparte. An idea which his family, had it ever been capable of learning anything or of forgetting anything, speedily found out to be a mistake. It was not in the nature of so quick-minded a young gentleman to be the constant companion of sovereigns, or the heir of a name which had filled the world with admiration and terror, without thinking some thoughts about himself. Besides, he was coaxed into ambition by the intriguers at St. Leu, and, among others, by that deafening talker, whose loquacity spoiled her genius, Madame de Staël. It was at this time that Louis Napoleon encountered the first peril of his life through the violent drawing of a tooth, causing an alarming hæmorrhage during two whole days. And now came the episode of flight and concealment; the Emperor broke loose from Elba; the brief and brilliant chronicle of the Hundred Days raised Hortense again to a position of splendour; a paroxysm of joy took possession of France, for the purple had bloomed again, and had it not been for the terrible infatuation which led the French battalions to the Belgian battle-field that struck their standards to the dust, Hortense might long have sat upon the semi-throne which the falling master of France erected for her. All this while, however, we are rather neglecting the subject of these

remarks; yet most great men derive their inspirations from their ancestry. 'I am the son of the Constable, or I am nothing,' said the great Bourbon, when he flung his Marshal's baton on the ground of battle and dared the four quarters of the world to touch it. Of course, nobody is simple enough to believe in the anecdote, because it belongs to that class of traditions which the late Mr. James Hannay was wont to designate as 'mock pearls.' This much is certain, that the Emperor who has just been carried to his modest grave at Chislehurst, owed the finest traits in his education and character to his mother, who exhausted all her large and various knowledge in teaching him, notwithstanding his unconquerable restlessness, his imperious disposition, and his verification of the fact asserted by Burke that 'kings are naturally lovers of low company.' Not a boy tossed for twopences on the Bridge of Constance but what the future Emperor, who lived to inhabit that splendid structure pompously dedicated to 'all the glories of France,' but knew him in his shirt sleeves, bare-footed—for he often took off his shoes to give them to a poor child—and this compels us to say that benevolence made up a large part of his character. The years passed in Bavaria in the sumptuous chateau of Arenenberg, and the course of study at Augsburg, impressed an additional stamp upon his mind, and there may be said began that long conspiracy which, often baffled, ultimately raised him to the throne. The Bonapartes, or their adherents, who were to be found everywhere, from the Moors of Scotland to the Marshes of Ancona, commenced assembling, discussing, planning, until they made the young Prince a Pretender almost in spite of himself. But there was this obstacle, that he had imbibed from his Swiss culture strong republican sympathies. With these in his heart he next entered into the burning political atmosphere of Italy, turning his back in hopelessness, as it were, upon France, since the youthful king of Rome still survived at Sienna, and Louis Philippe had won, more through intrigue than through his personal merits, the crown of Charles X. Consequently Louis Napoleon, at this period plotted with the democrats of Italy, compromised himself with the Carbonari, ventured upon revolutionary demonstrations, and gradually brought insurrection into the Campagna. Men from the Sabine mountains, from swamps, from the quarries, began to show their daring countenances in the ancient capital, 'which breathed only sedition.' With his brother he joined the insurgent ranks, and ran a narrow risk of losing his life after the manner of 'Francs-Tireurs' during the late war. But this first enterprise, like many which succeeded it, was not destined to triumph. After a few engagements, and after losing his brother, his only refuge was in flight; and the adventures of his mother during that harrowing time constitute one

of the most remarkable romances of modern history. He being ill, she kept him hidden in the chamber of a palace in Ancona, next to the very one which an Austrian General charged with the order for his arrest occupied. But, ever ingenious and dauntless, she contrived a method. In the livery of a servant, and standing like a footman behind a carriage, travelling day and night, often recognised though never betrayed, sleeping for an hour or two on a heap of broken pebbles, taking hasty meals in the poorest ale-houses, he at length passed the frontier. It was a bold step, because the Bonapartes had been solemnly exiled and forbidden on pain of death to re-enter France. But Hortense took the courageous course and informed the citizen king of her arrival with that of her son. They were permitted to pass through the territory on their way to England, and reached London when Talleyrand was ambassador, when the Napoleonic name was once more popular, and where it was feared that should he visit Belgium the citizens of Brussels would seize upon him and make him king in spite of himself. But the horizon of his ambition had widened, and while he seemed to be enjoying the hospitality of the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey, to be spending simple days at Hampton Court, at the Tower of London, in the Thames Tunnel, and at Richmond, deep, cogent plans were in his mind, and enough of them oozed out to frighten that hypocritical old poltroon Louis Philippe. This sovereign, who himself was the creature of the lowest machinations, was needlessly alarmed, because nearly twenty years were to elapse before the *avatae* of Napoleonism was to take place. Indeed they revisited France, loitered from Chantilly to St. Denis, and to Malmaison, then a ruin—ruined like the fortunes of its former beautiful and maltreated mistress—and thence the mother and son passed into Switzerland. There he sat down to write mild political reveries, and ‘considerations’ on the state of politics in the mountain republic; but for all that he did not cease to look down on those giant hills upon the smiling Champagne of France, of course with a yearning which was to be satisfied notwithstanding how hopeless it seemed then. This was the argument by which he reconciled the conspiracy to his own conscience. Had he not an historical name? Did either the eighteenth Louis, or Louis Philippe, possess a superior title; the former thrust upon France by foreign bayonets, the latter crowned in a moment of exultation and confusion by a mob, when the diadem of thirty generations of kings lay literally in the dust? But the method by which the Prince endeavoured to accomplish his mighty purpose was desperation itself. With the merest handful of adherents he undertook the celebrated Strasburg expedition, calculating upon the charm which his great ancestor’s name would exercise upon the garrison, the spell which

a glimpse of the Imperial Eagle would work upon those old soldiers then at the plough, the enthusiasm of the students in public schools, and the contempt which by considerable classes was felt for the citizen king, King Louis Philippe. The story of the abortive plot is picturesque, the midnight meeting (lasting until dawn) of the conspirators; their alarm when a galloping of horses, with a jingle of sabres, was heard in the street; their emerging in the cold light of the morning, and with incredible audacity presenting themselves, bearing the Imperial Emblem aloft before the entire fourth regiment, to the cry of 'Behold the Nephew of Napoleon,' to which the response came in an instant, 'Long live the Emperor!' But there the triumph of the treason ended, and in a few hours Louis Napoleon lay in a dungeon of Strasburg, preliminary to his transportation across the Atlantic. It was not the policy of Louis Philippe to treat the man who bore such a name with violence or vindictiveness; but a suspicion was current at the time that by sending him *viâ* the most unhealthy region of South America he might have hoped to get rid of a dangerous pretender. However he passed his leisure on board ship very philosophically, reading Rousseau and Chateaubriand, cultivating the friendship of the officers, writing the most affectionate letters to his mother, whom he loved as he never loved any other person living, and regretting his separation from his first betrothed, the Princess Mathilde. In a terrible storm at sea he exhibited that calm courage which marked the whole of his career: but it is impossible not to believe that all the while he was determined to seize upon the first opportunity of returning to Europe, which he did even earlier than he expected, being summoned to the deathbed of Hortense, arriving only in time to receive her whispered blessing and to close her eyes. Then did the government of Louis Philippe commit the most fatal mistake in its history, not excepting the prohibition of the February banquets, by betraying its fear of him, and demanding his extradition from the territories of the mountain republic. Immediately, the blood of the Switzers took fire; they never yet had surrendered a political refugee; and, small nation though they are, they avowed themselves ready to fight to the last foot of ground rather than give up their guest. With a generosity always characteristic of him, and a tenderness for human life not always so characteristic of him, Louis Napoleon, when the hills of Helvetia were as so many fortresses guarded by armed bands, and the French legions were rolling in an immense array towards the Alpine frontier, voluntarily cancelled the cause of the disruption by removing himself to London. But he had fulfilled his aim; he was now a peril and therefore a power in Europe; Louis Philippe had confessed in him the existence of a rival, and, excepting in one instance, he was

never more ridiculed even by those who believed least in the re-*arising* 'star,' which was called of 'The brave, whose beam hath shed such glory o'er the quick and dead.' It is true that in England a great many anecdotes gathered round his name concerning his gambling in the metropolis, his betting on the course, his fantastic appearance at the Eglinton tournament, with other episodes which may or may not be authentic, but as for the Boulogne enterprise, though an insane one, it was not so utterly ludicrous as the Orleanist partisans represented it to be. There was something stagey, no doubt, in carrying over a wooden eagle and a tame eagle supported by a following of sixty, but, as he said, when asked where was the Bonapartist party, 'The party is nowhere, but the cause is everywhere.' With reference, however, to his residence in London, it contradicts all human nature to suppose that a man passing his time in the hells of St. James, among the blacklegs of Newmarket, and in society more questionable still, should have devoted himself to political studies so profound, should have applied his pen to works so elaborate and original, and should have so completely mastered the principles of the English Constitution; and recurring to the trivialities of his Boulogne invasion in a little Channel steamer, the French have no right to satirise them, since it was not so very long before they found their liberties taken away by a bribe of sausages and champagne. The adventure at once collapsed; the soldiers would not quit their flags, the eagle would not fly, and in a moment which he must always have repented, Louis Napoleon shot a grenadier who was simply performing his duty. Then came the most extraordinary event of this man's wonderful career. Indicted for high treason, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment in the castle of Ham, a dreary fortalice encircled by moats and marshes, and it was a compliment to the fear he inspired that thirty-six feet thickness of wall were not thought too much to confine that Machiavellian genius. He throve in his captivity; he wrote books, he corresponded; but none the less did he concoct new schemes of ambition. His escape in 1846, in spite of four hundred jailors, was a romance in itself. Shaving off his moustache, assuming the dress of an *ouvrier*, putting on a battered dirty hat, and a pair of wooden shoes, carrying a plank on his shoulder, and leaving a lay-figure in the bed to represent him, he walked out through files of soldiers; he passed the officer on guard, who, luckily for him, happened to be reading a love letter; his short black pipe completed the disguise; and, presto! he was in Belgium, and two or three days afterwards at the St. James's Theatre in London. His turn was come; within two years the imbecility of Louis Philippe had reached its climax, and the hero of the umbrella made a miserable flight of it, leaving the field open whether to a Republic or to an

Empire. Everyone remembers how the Republic perished in its own flames; everyone remembers what a procession of mediocrities during a brief time passed across the scene; and everyone remembers how through that which was indubitably an unscrupulous act, the third Napoleon bounded from the Presidency into the Purple. But it must not be forgotten that France was, while the Republic lasted, one vast nest of intrigues, and it can hardly be doubted that after the first outbreak of terror caused by the Coup d'état, the general feeling was one of unequivocal relief. Nor was this sentiment diminished when, after a series of fatal struggles, all resulting in his success, the monarch, now dead, assumed the style and title of "Napoleon III., Emperor of the French, by the grace of God and the national will." The country had already revived under his rule. Even Marseilles, whence emanated that splendid song which shook a throne and inspired a revolution, accepted the Empire with joy. But, strangely enough, this man who thus suddenly became autocrat of a vast and magnificent dominion, was never crowned, and never really wore the robes of Cæsar. He contented himself with wearing the uniform of a simple general of division, in which he lies in his tomb at Chislehurst—a concession to a certain spirit of democracy which was affected by the Empire. Now arose the rumour, never verified, that, prompted by his colonels, he would undertake to avenge Waterloo, and then a tremendous hubbub arose. Yet all the time his policy was to fortify his position by cementing an alliance with this country. The army clamoured for employment, and found it in confronting the gigantic hosts of Russia, unequalled in numbers, brilliant in aspect, and poor in materials. From the day when the Czar threw down the gauntlet in the East of Europe, Louis Napoleon was our firm and faithful coadjutor and friend. His fleets sailed into the Black Sea and the Baltic with ours; his legions marched side by side with our own, in a glorious rivalry; and the bravest blood of France was mingled with the bravest blood of England in face of the Malakoff and the Redan. All the events of the part he took in that resultless war; of his marriage; of his visit, in his imperial capacity, to England, where he displayed an almost youthful pride in dating a proclamation from the royal castle of Windsor; in wearing the insignia of the Garter, and in receiving the freedom of the city of London; of the attempts to assassinate him, and of the Italian campaign, are too fresh and familiar to the public mind to necessitate recapitulation. As for the Mexican episode, it was too painfully fatal to be dwelt upon. The French once more gave him their millions of votes, and then came the epoch of disaster. Impelled by an irresistible popular and military feeling throughout his empire, which simply signified an alternative

between war and dethronement, in an evil hour he pronounced those sinister words, 'The Rhine—nothing more, nothing less.' It needs not to be told how the more than million soldiers of Germany—which had schemed to force on this invasion—drove it back, followed it from citadel to citadel to the gates of Paris, and even beyond them to the Tuileries itself, receiving the Emperor as their prisoner through the blood-drenched posterns of Sedan. The Imperial story, as we have briefly essayed it, is now finished; but it should not close without a tribute to the magnificent courage invariably exhibited by this man, who, unlike the German Emperor and his son, shared personally in the battles, endeavouring to the last to rally his men, breaking through wall after wall of fire and steel, and inflicting dreadful wounds on the German army, as at those pits of carnage, the quarries of Gravelotte, until overwhelmed by mere superiority of organisation and of numbers. It merely remains to consider for a moment some causes which plunged him into the venture which proved his ruin and led to the change from Sedan to Wilhelmshöhe, and from Wilhelmshöhe to Chislehurst. The army under the Emperor took precedence of all other classes and professions; it felt itself to be supreme; indulged and pampered, it lounged about in brutal indolence until satiated, and then raised the cry of 'Glory,' insisted upon being led to fields where plunder and promotion might be obtained, and, nevertheless, did not improve either in discipline or that *élan* which carried the leather-breeches of the Old Guard through Friedland, Wagram, the Pyramids, and Tilsit, not to speak of Jena. We heard, while the war lasted, much concerning the vast columns of reinforcements perpetually marching through Paris to fight for the Empire on the frontier; but not half of these were more morally or physically fit for campaigning against the solid and sober battalions of Prussia. It is not very pleasant to say, but it is the truth, that a sad proportion of them were lazy, licentious, preferring to wait for victory without participating in it, and that not a few were criminals of the deepest dye who deserved to be gnawing the chains of convicted guilt at the galleys rather than to be serving under the still immortal and soon again to be triumphant standards of their country. Those monsters of atrocity, to quote an example from another period, Louvel, Fieschi, and Alibanel, had worn the uniform. While saying this, however, it would be the depth of injustice to deny that another class of the army fought round the Imperial flag with unflinching valour, redeeming the fame of France even in the hour of defeat. But fortune rode with the ranks of the enemy, and thus fell from a zenith of power the man who for twenty years was at once the alarm

and the admiration of the world, and thus has passed away a life which will have left a memory indelible and glorious for History to treat with justice or injustice, according to its caprice, and according to the varying judgments of those who during his reign were stung by the Bees and obscured by the Purple, or of others who understood his genius and were grateful for his generosity.

MARBLE LIFE.

[CONCLUSION.]

LIZZY felt that to George Sempton she must fly for succour. Him she could not doubt. She was troubled with no shadow of fear lest Miss Palgrave had robbed her of his affection. He was all her own.

To tell her uncle of the mysterious machinations actually going on under his roof was not to be thought of; he would not believe her. He would apply to Herr Baülein; he would ruin all precautions; or, could he be induced to believe, terror would be fatal to him. She must act alone, which meant with George Sempton, and she rose to find him ere he left the house.

Her hand was actually on the handle of the door when she paused. How could she seek him? How ask his help? Wherein lay her right so to do? He had never told her that he loved her, well as she knew it. How could she appeal to him with so strange a tale, and how warn him of his own danger from Miss Palgrave?

The hesitation was natural; it was womanly. It lasted but a minute, and then reason told her that it was no time for scruples. The danger was imminent; there was no other help. A woman's tact would teach her how much to repeat. The mesmeric power so meanly acquired, the secret understanding between the German and the governess, would suffice. Lizzy moved downstairs as quickly as she was able.

The hesitation had been natural—but it had been fatal. She was too late.

As she crossed the hall she caught sight of George Sempton, making rapid progress along the avenue. Perhaps even then she would have recalled him—but it was not to be. Even as she stood she felt drowsiness creep over her, and, turning dreamily round, she saw Miss Palgrave standing behind her. How she passed the remainder of that day

Lizzy never knew. Memory seemed on that point a blank. She had vague recollections of much mental suffering, of a strong sense of danger, a powerful determination not to submit to the bands thrown about her, of a struggling against the rivetting of those bands by the concentration of Miss Palgrave's iron will.

The next day there was a sensible relief. Miss Palgrave was gone; probably unconscious of Mr. Sempton's vicinity. What excuse she had made for leaving her charge Lizzy could not remember. It was of no consequence. She was gone. Lizzy felt more herself, though the momentary vigour of the day before had not returned. She, however, felt most acutely that running down-stairs to speak to Mr. Sempton when he was actually in the house, hard as she had found it, was a different thing from writing to him to ask him to call upon her. But it must be done, and it was done. Hardly was the note despatched when a knock at the door roused her from the half-sleep into which she had fallen. It was nurse. The children were ailing. Rosalie and the boys complained of sore throat and were feverish. Nurse was sure it was scarlet fever, and Miss Rosalie, always selfish, would have little Miss Mary to wait on her. The child was sitting on Miss Rosy's bed, and if it were fever had surely caught it by this time. This was alarming news; but even while nurse was speaking, Lizzy's first thought was that the fever might be made an excuse for declining to receive Miss Palgrave again. Her first attention must, however, be given to the invalids.

Rosalie was conquered, though with difficulty, Mary banished from the sick room, and the doctor summoned. The messenger met him, and he was in the house within half an hour.

Nurse's fears were not groundless. It was undoubtedly scarlet fever. One of the twins seemed likely to have it badly. Rosalie was always a refractory patient. The doctor feared Miss Archdale had a hard task before her, but Lizzy's heart rose to the work. If only, if only the fever would keep out the enemy so much more to be feared! For the moment her one wish was to make all essential arrangements in time to meet Mr. Sempton before he could enter the infected house. She had begged him to come at once, and she was most anxious to escape before her uncle heard the ill news. His alarm would, she knew, be so great that it would be impossible to leave him. Unfortunately, her intentions were frustrated. Before leaving the house, Dr. Plant took upon himself to knock at the door of the library, and with the firm belief that he was rendering a great service to Miss Archdale, he gently broke the subject of the fever to her uncle. Poor Lizzy was actually putting on her hat, when a message summoned her to her uncle's presence.

'Don't come in—don't touch anything—don't sit down—I hear you have actually been into the nursery. Stay where you are I beg,' were the first words that greeted her, and they told her what to expect.

Her uncle was walking up and down in a state of painful agitation. The little doctor sat on the very edge of his chair, wiping his scared and blackened face, for at the first mention of fever Mr. Archdale had immediately seized the nearest bottle and dashed the contents all around him, in the firm belief that he was using a disinfectant, and showing great presence of mind, and perfectly unconscious that he was, on the contrary using an ink bottle, and sprinkling the dark fluid on his visitor's face.

In vain Lizzy strove to speak. He seemed to think that infection flowed from her lips.

'Not a word, I beg. How am I to bear these shocks in my weak state. You should have had more consideration for me my dear;' and as Lizzy drew nearer the ink bottle was raised with threatening gestures. 'You should have managed better. After all your years of experience at the head of a household like mine, and such a thing never happening before. It is too bad Lizzy. I must say it is too bad. But it is what I must expect now—alone—neglected in my old age. Not a word I beg. There is more infection in the breath than in anything. Something must be done at once. Have you considered at all? Where am I to go? Have you sent for Herr Baülein? He might take us somewhere. I can be ready in an hour. Don't you think I could be ready in an hour my love? and so could you.'

In vain did Lizzy try to calm him and to convince him that she, at least, must remain with the children; and that he would be safe in a distant part of the house. He was indignant at the idea of being neglected, while by a ludicrous inconsistency he kept her standing at a distance. Then forgetting for a moment his terrors, he tottered to his drawers of treasures, and began opening them one by one, trying to decide what he should carry away, and what might be left without fear of rust, moth, thieves, or fire, four evils which he appeared to imagine must inevitably attack the house the moment he was out of it.

Lizzy, in despair, glanced at the clock. She must go. With a hasty sign to the Doctor, who still trembled in the distance, she rushed from the room; and, as she did so, she heard for the last time her uncle's feeble voice calling to her.

'Lizzy, Lizzy, I cannot settle all this alone. Lizzy, my love, come back! How can I get on without you?'

Ah, how often were those words to ring in her ears in days to come. She flew to her room and seized her cloak and hat. Nurse tried

stop her as she rushed down-stairs. The twins were calling to her from their beds, and Rosy's imperious voice was heard reiterating her name. It seemed as though all the voices of her home combined to arrest her from running to destruction.

In vain, in vain. She almost ran down the avenue, and as she turned across the grass, she discerned the figure of George Lempton advancing towards her. She stood still. All her hurry and excitement vanished. He came nearer. She had intended to begin by warning him not to shake hands with her; to keep at a distance for fear of infection. Her little speech was prepared—but warning, fever, danger, all were forgotten as he came eagerly forward and grasped her hand. He had prepared no speech to greet her. Every word was spontaneous.

'At last!' said he. 'How I have watched for this. You have no idea how impossible it is to find you alone. Now, what your business with me may be I don't know and I don't care. I care for one thing alone; afterwards I am ready to go to the world's end for you; but first you have to listen to me. I have vowed a vow that you shall listen to me first and foremost while I tell you of the immeasurable love I have for you. Could you ever, ever learn to think of me?'

If that were all he meant to ask, the colour on her cheeks, the light in her eyes, soon made him bolder. His abruptness had done him no harm. It was not hard to divine the truth. She loved him.

For a few brief minutes Lizzy forgot all but the ecstasy of her happiness. She who all her young life had been the mainstay, the guide and helper of others, had now some one to guide and help her. No longer need she look around in vain for human sympathy and aid. The sad silence of a lonely life would no longer reign within her breast. There was a strong arm, a clear intellect—above all, an honest, loving heart to stand between her and the hard world.

What wonder that Lizzy forgot the danger to be averted; forgot her fears, her uncle, her charges. But it was so after that dream. First came the thought so long forcibly excluded. What would those at home do without her? Then followed the whole trains of cares—Herr Bäulein, Miss Palgrave, the unknown danger, the need of prompt action, the fever. Ay, the fever! and, withdrawing her hand suddenly from his grasp, she exclaimed—

'Oh! what have I done? You must not come near me. The fever! I forgot the fever.'

As she spoke, her upraised wrist was seized from behind; a soft, white hand made a few rapid passes, a momentary vision of a cruel white face flashed before her, a pair of light blue eyes glared fixedly at her own. She grew, white, rigid, powerless.

Yet her senses were all her own. She heard George Sempton's

exclamation of alarm as he caught her in his arms. She saw Miss Palgrave bending eagerly over her. She was even conscious of the concentration of purpose with which the governess held her hand, and while apparently smoothing her brow, continued to make the passes. Nay more, she could mark how studiously the cold blue eyes were averted from George Sempton's face, as though his influence were to be avoided, and she saw that rage and jealousy had for the moment conquered love. He only saw that Miss Archdale had fainted, and he was grateful to Miss Palgrave for her kind care. He tried to help, and obeyed all orders with readiness. They laid her on the grass, but when he tried to take her hand, her whole frame was agitated by a convulsion, subdued by Miss Palgrave's gentle hand, but repeated at the slightest touch of his.

He was bitterly pained. His distress and agitation were very great. Without trusting herself to look at him, without for one instant swerving from the task in hand, Miss Palgrave insisted upon his leaving them to call for help. It was, she said, impossible for him to carry her to the house himself, when his very touch brought on the convulsions. He went, and she seated herself on the grass by Lizzy's side, and, bending over her with apparent tenderness, inserted a small piece of wood between her clenched teeth, and dropped into her mouth one or two drops from a small bottle. Lizzy felt a sensation of icy cold creep through her veins, which then swelled as though they would burst, and again grew cold, as though a stone fluid were circulating through her frame. Miss Palgrave now recommenced the passes, and when George Sempton returned, far in advance of those he had summoned, she was still apparently using every effort to restore consciousness.

Miss Archdale was carried to Courtlands, and the doctor was summoned to her bedside. Twice on George Sempton's approaching her, she fell into violent convulsions; but after each attack she relapsed into a state of lethargy. At sunset it was known throughout the village that Elizabeth Archdale was dead. She died quietly, both hands clasped in those of the kind governess, who never left her from the moment she was taken ill until she breathed her last. It was the most sudden, the most extraordinarily rapid case of scarlet fever, with a very difficult Latin name, that Dr. Prant had ever happened to meet with in the whole course of his practice. He sent an elaborate account of it to one of the first medical journals, and felt himself a great man.

Who can describe the state of that panic-stricken household, thus suddenly and awfully deprived of a mistress. The infection must have been peculiarly malignant, for servant after servant fell ill, and though Dr. Prant continued to assure them that it was only from

fright, that information did not appear to stay the fever. The nurse died within the week. Rosalie was given over. The twins were in danger, and the house was taboo'd by the neighbours far and near. Mr. Archdale's agony of fright drove him to a measure of which no one would have thought him capable. At the first news of Lizzy's death he ordered his carriage and drove to the station, and dismissing his servants, went on to London alone, nor was he again heard of for some weeks. George Sempton at length found him in Edinburgh, helpless and wretched at an hotel, and after some persuasion induced him to return home.

And Lizzy herself? What were her sufferings during this awful period? When she came to this part of her story her agitation was so great that it was some time before she could continue.

'It was,' said she, '*Madness without the power of being mad*,' and the words give one some faint idea of the agonies she endured. Never for one moment did she lose the acuteness of consciousness. She understood all Miss Palgrave's machinations, her determination to keep George Sempton out of the room, to keep him away as well from herself as from her victim. She felt herself becoming every hour more and more subservient to the mesmeric powers, and when the mastery was complete, she marked Miss Palgrave's look of relief, and heard the announcement of her own death, without being able to utter a sound, or to move as much as an eyelid. She was perfectly conscious when she was lifted into her coffin; when George Sempton, disregarding all orders and warnings, made his way to her side, and groaned in bitterness of grief over her pale, still form. That was the acmé of agony. That was the moment when she nearly broke the bands which held her.

Besides all this she had to hear the half-whispered conferences of the household over her coffin. She learnt how she was loved and respected. She heard the miserable situation of the family discussed—the neglected state of the children. She heard of nurse's death and of her uncle's disappearance, and the conjectures and fears respecting his fate. Towards the last rumours of violent war between Rosalie and the governess met her ears.

It was all horrible, horrible. Words fail one to describe her sensations. She could hardly believe that it was a reality—this torture that she was enduring. Every moment she hoped to wake and find it all a dream. But she knew too well that it was real. She was in the power of a wicked unprincipled woman, and, terrible as was the present suffering, worse, far worse was the thought of what might be yet in store for her. What this might be she could form no idea.

Surely they would not bury her alive. The idea was one too awful to be entertained. Yet if this were not their plan, what might not be her fate.

The hour when George Sempton stood by her was perhaps that of the most acute agony; yet there was one other of pain sufficient to part soul and body. When, the door being left ajar, a little step was heard pattering into the room; when the youngest twin, her especial darling, catching sight of her, and then first dimly understanding what had been told him of her death, darted forward with a cry, and fell crouching by her side, sobbing as though his heart would break; when he called her again and again in his soft, child's voice, and implored her to come back to him, for 'Miss Palgrave was so cross,' he wanted Cousin Liz; and when Miss Palgrave, alarmed, at the open door, came quickly in and shook him, dragging him out with a jerk sufficient to dislocate his small bones, as with tearful eyes he turned for the last time to the kind mother-cousin who had never before disregarded his cries for help. Ah, this was hard to bear.

The funeral day arrived. Yes. They meant to let her be buried. As the men entered the room to nail down the coffin she strove to scream—strove as she had striven before, again and again. In vain. Each nail was driven home. And then terror, madness, despair, all were lost in wonder at finding that she could still breathe easily. Suffocation was not the fate reserved for her. The diabolical conspirators had cared for her life.

She was carried to her grave, or rather to her allotted niche in the family vault in the chapel at Courtlands. The service was read over her. In her deep stillness she listened to the sobs which shook the frame of George Sempton, as last of all he lingered. One by one the footsteps died on her ear. She was left alone. Her life was over. Her life, her death, her burial. Yet she lived, breathed, was conscious—and suffered. Ah, how she suffered. Could human ingenuity have devised torture more excruciating? How she listened to each sound—the drip, drip, off the moist walls—the strange creakings and groanings—of what? Of the coffins near her, as though the occupants turned in their narrow beds. The rattling of the old windows. The solemn flapping of the banners which hung over the family pew. With what fearful tension of nerve did she wait for the next act in this horrible drama which to her was so fearfully real.

It was not long in coming. Muffled footsteps, the grating of a key, a light gleaming through the airholes of her coffin lid; whispered voices, voices she had heard before. She was moved, with difficulty to the ground; the lid was raised, and with the greatest care she was

taken out and wrapped in a dark sheet. The coffin was replaced, and filled with stones. And then slowly and silently she was borne forth, and the cold night air played upon her brow.

No word was now spoken. No light was shown. On—on—on—in silence, in darkness. It was a fearful procession, if procession it could be called. What horrible thoughts reigned in the minds of those who carried her—and, oh! what madness in her own breast. At length they entered a house, and she was left, still wrapped in her sheet, upon a hard floor for hours, still powerless to move or cry.

The next morning all was confusion around her. She could see nothing, but she could distinguish the sounds of packing, the moving of heavy bodies, the closing of cases, hammering of nails, dragging and twisting of ropes. After a time she herself was lifted into a large case, and carefully secured from any possible injury. The voice of Herr Baulein pronounced in German that it was all right, and the lid was closed. A long and terrible journey by land and sea followed, during which bodily suffering was so intense as to drown even the thought of her awful situation. There was, strangely enough, no sense of suffocation, but there was excruciating pain from the rigid state of every fibre and muscle. At length the journey came to an end, and after another weary night of waiting, she was unpacked and carefully placed upright—rigid and motionless, with her hands hanging straight down as they had been placed in her coffin. At the same moment she was once more conscious of the mesmeric passes about her face, and she was able, nay, obliged to open her eyes.

She found herself in a large room, face to face with Miss Palgrave. Herr Baulein was arranging blinds and shutters so as to throw a good light upon the spot where Lizzy stood. Presently he seated himself, and regarded her with a critical eye. Her terror was the more excessive from the absence of all powers of expression. She could only stand motionless, for every limb, every feature was turned to marble.

'The best subject we have had for years,' exclaimed Herr Baulein.

Miss Palgrave continued the passes without reply.

'What a thousand pities that there should be any doubt about the entire subjugation of that brain,' he continued. 'Slacken the limbs—so.' And Lizzy became conscious that her muscles were more flexible. The sudden cessation of pain was hardly a relief, so great was the reaction, the sensation of weakness so overpowering; she attempted to start forward to implore their mercy. In vain!—so completely was she in Miss Palgrave's power, that by her will alone was movement possible. What could they intend to do with her? Again, again she asked herself this question, in an agony of terror.

‘How shall I place her?’ asked Miss Palgrave.

‘I am considering; she would do for so many subjects. Let me think. Ah! I have it. A Florentine flower girl. Good! Extend the arms—so! Head on one side—that is wrong; right, forward—that is good—good!’

And following his directions, Miss Palgrave altered her posture again and again. At one time there was a doubt and a consultation.

‘Would she not answer best as a copy of some ancient work of art; or should she represent a fancy piece?’ But in the end they resolved upon the original idea—a Florentine flower girl.

Suddenly, to her surprise, she fell flat on her face. Herr Baulien caught her just ere she reached the ground. He was very angry. ‘Hein hein, why did you not tell me you were tired?’ said he to his confederate. ‘Is she chipped? Is she injured?’

Miss Palgrave rapidly swallowed a glass of wine, and a few passes completed the work for that day. Lizzy was left once more to herself, to try to form some idea of her extraordinary situation; but in truth it baffled her. The next day, another ‘sitting,’ in which all details of attitude and display were arranged, and some fluid was dropped into her eyes and ears, and rubbed into her hands and feet; then she was set on one side.

‘Hein hein, that is good, only the basket and the flowers wanting. Ready for the workshop,’ pronounced Herr Baulein that day.

In that room stood other packing cases, and Lizzy, set aside in her corner, had an opportunity of seeing another victim undergo the whole process through which she had just passed. It was incomprehensible. Had this man and woman, then, actually the power of turning human beings into marble? The power to suspend animation without extinguishing life! How had they possessed themselves of a secret so diabolical? Would discovery be possible? How long could they detain their victims? Would life, real life, ever return, or were they doomed to centuries of a living death?

In this state of terror she was carried down to the workshop, a room on the ground-floor, where a few workmen, in blouses and paper caps, were engaged on statues of real marble, in various stages of forwardness. Here her basket was fitted on to her arm: it contained flowers, and a few more were cut on the small pedestal on which she was placed, great care being taken to match the marble to her own colouring, for every tinge of colour had left her body; she presented every appearance of a faultless marble statue. She was now taken to an inner room, where Herr Baulein was engaged in modelling clay; here he affected to put a few finishing touches on her, and she was then carried through the workshop to an outer room, in which stood

number of the finished works of the famous sculptor Herr Baulein, who was making all Europe to ring with the sound of his fame.

Here Elizabeth Archdale remained for five years. Years of lingering, protracted agony. Years of hopeless watching and waiting. During that time hundreds of English visitors passed through the studio. More than one familiar face did she gaze upon with longing indescribable. At such times, when the door closed upon some former friend, it was, she said, like dying afresh to all she loved.

By degrees were most of the statues sold and replaced by others. Her price was so high that, though offers were made, she still remained on hand. Lizzy asserts that some of the statues were really of marble, but she knew too well that the best and most admired were of far other material.

One day, in the height of the season, the door opened to admit the revered form of her uncle.

It seemed impossible, yet there he stood—himself and no other. And when he passed beyond her sight without noticing her, the anguish she experienced at being powerless to follow him, powerless even to turn her head to watch his feeble steps, was wellnigh unbearable. It seemed as though reason and consciousness must desert her.

Presently he returned. He approached. He was leaning on the arm of a stranger, a gentleman, and was now accompanied by Monsieur Ponville, who remained in charge during Herr Baulein's frequent and prolonged absences—absences of which Lizzy could never think without a shudder when she considered their probable object.

It was plain that Monsieur Ponville was not in all the secrets of his employer, or, more probably, he did not know Mr. Archdale, for he now drew the old man's attention to the Florentine Flower Girl.

'Herr Baulein considers this one of his best pieces, Monsieur,' were his first words, and Mr. Archdale raised his eyes to his niece's face. Poor Lizzy! It was maddening. It was horrible. She heard once more those loved accents, those feeble tones—more feeble now than when last he uttered her name imploringly in the library at Courtlands. She saw once more the bent figure, the trembling hands, the sunken features of him who had for so long depended upon her for every comfort. Who cared for him now? Ah, who!

His whole attention was rivetted upon her, and he gazed on her only as a work of art, a beautiful object, a thing that money could buy. And she could not make herself known to him. She could not implore him by word, look, or sign to release her from her painful bondage. She could not ask him one question about those loved ones from whom she had been so ruthlessly torn. She must see him disappear from

her sight, to take his part in that living world from which she was banished.

He was strangely drawn to her. Again and again he returned. His friend, who treated him with every attention, placed a chair where he could gaze at her undisturbed, and for nearly an hour he sat there discussing her merits as a work of art, praising, criticising, little dreaming, little dreaming that that graceful statue had once been the mainspring of his home.

Lizzy strained every energy to catch his words, hoping to glean some news of home. And one piece of intelligence she did gain.

'Even Mrs. Archdale must admire this, sir,' said the friend, and her uncle shook his head. There was a visible increase of nervousness as he replied. 'Ah, I don't know—I really don't know. She might. But you know she don't care much for art. She says money may be better spent. And she is right—ah, quite right. One ought not to spend too much on fancies, she says.'

'Always excepting Mrs. Archdale's own,' muttered the friend, almost in Lizzy's ear.

Then he was married—and unhappily! Her poor, poor uncle. How she craved and wearied to know more.

The next day they came again, and she gathered that Mrs. Archdale insisted upon returning to England at once, though her uncle wished to remain in Rome. They spent some time in contemplating her.

'My dear Mr. Fox,' said her uncle somewhat suddenly; 'I really don't know. What do you think of—of course I only throw out a suggestion—I don't suppose it would do—still—how would it be if—what should you think of buying this beautiful flower girl?'

'I! my dear sir. Ah, I wish I could afford it.'

'Of course, I knew it wouldn't do. I only meant to suggest. I beg you will understand that I only suggested that—that is—if you happened to buy her, I might, that is we might, take her off your hands.'

'Buy her for you, my dear sir, that is a very different matter. I see no reason on earth against it, and every reason for it.'

'Oh, but I don't mean to *do* it, at least only to *talk it over*, you understand. I'm afraid it wouldn't do.'

'Why not?' returned Mr. Fox. 'I think——' And here, while Lizzy's very life seemed to hang upon their words, some stranger approaching, they walked away to conclude the discussion, and in a few minutes more the door closed upon them.

This was almost worst than all that had gone before, to be so near, yet so far off!

Her poor uncle, how changed, how crushed and subdued. His irrita-

bility has given place to a frightened meekness most painful to witness. What had his home life become, and what had become of all those little ones whom she had left? How she waited, and waited, and watched during the next few days. What if he decided to buy her? What if she were taken once more to Courtlands, and set up a mere graven image in the house where she had lived and loved. There were moments when she felt that this would be unendurable, yet she longed for it intensely; longed, in fact, for any change to break this living death. Of one thing she was however, on reflection, certain. Herr Baulein would never let her go to Courtlands. She had not passed so many years in his studio without noticing his anxious care as to the destination of his living marbles, nor had it escaped her notice that he was more than commonly careful about her, though his motive she could not divine.

About a month after her uncle's visit, Herr Baulein being again absent, Monsieur Ponville entered the studio with an air of triumph, holding in his hand an open letter.

'Sold at last, Mademoiselle,' he exclaimed, 'and a glorious home you will have. Lord B—— is your purchaser, and like an English Milor he pays down the sum at once. Ah, ah! what will Herr Baulein say on his return when he finds you gone. Truly have I done a good stroke of work. You are to be sent off at once. But not for England, *Ma Belle*. The villa at C—— is to be your home.'

It was a bitter disappointment. It cut her off for ever from all hope of re-visiting her home.

The careful and elaborate packing followed, and then a journey. During the latter one circumstance struck her as strange. There was a pause—a very long pause. She was detained for what seemed to her an endless time; then, by the conversation around her, she learned that her destination was altered. She was to go to England. She had been sold again. Ere long the familiar tone of her native tongue fell on her ear. She was in England. Nay, more, she was in Cheshire. Could she mistake the old provincial dialect. Where, oh where, was she bound!

Then came the long hours of silence. The night, she supposed, and then the morning,—movement in the house—a shuffling step along the passage and into the room, and some one walked round and round the packing case. There were a few words—trembling, half-whispered words.

'Perhaps I had better wait; I wonder if I ought to wait. I might ring the bell. Better not—better not; they'd be at dinner. She doesn't like them to be disturbed at dinner. She's at luncheon. If I

could get it done while she 'is at luncheon! No, no, no: better not. I should want her help, of course. Of course I should. She thinks she knows, that is, she knows all about it. She might drive to-day—no, no, wouldn't do, wouldn't do. I think I'll wait a bit.'

And Mr. Archdale shuffled off. Yes, there could be no doubt, whether she was at Courtlands or not, that could be none other than Mr. Archdale, and Lizzy felt that she was the property of her uncle.

After some time servants entered; there was a bustle and confusion, much placing of chairs and footstools, and then the rustling of a silk dress, accompanied by the shuffling steps and feeble tones of Mr. Archdale. He was apologising, apparently, for the hundredth time, for the liberty he had taken in spending his own money so foolishly upon a mere statue.

'You have said all that a hundred times, and I am sick to death of hearing it, so now let us watch the unpacking of this precious statue,' said a harsh voice, which yet struck on Lizzy's ear as strangely familiar. In a few minutes she was to see her uncle's wife—her new Aunt. In a few minutes the case was opened, the careful packing undone, and Elizabeth Archdale was lifted up and placed before her uncle and aunt.

They sat side by side in two luxurious armchairs. Mr. Archdale bent forward, and began eagerly pointing out, with the knowledge and taste of a connoisseur, the merits of his new purchase, but as the lady leant back in her chair, with a scowl on her handsome face, his manner grew more deprecating and frightened. The servants stood aside waiting for orders.

The statue, motionless before its new owners, was so lifelike, so natural in its *pose*, that it almost seemed to be offering them flowers from the rustic basket, while the expression of sadness in the still, marble face was touching in its intensity.

Mr. Archdale humbly drew his wife's attention to that face, little dreaming that thought worked in the brain, that love and sorrow reigned in the heart, that while he gazed admiringly on the statue, that statue was gazing with all the love and pity of a human being upon him, and with dismay and consternation upon his companion. For Lizzy could hardly believe her eyes. In her uncle's proud and scornful wife, in the insolent fine lady who evidently held him in a state of abject fear, she beheld—Rosalie.

Could she have disbelieved her eyes, doubt would have been set at rest by the words 'My dear, I can't help thinking—I only throw it out as a *suggestion*, you understand—I don't *assert* anything—I mean, the first thing that attracted me, though I said nothing at the time—'

'I wish you would say what you do mean, without all that rigma-role,' was the amiable reply.

'A likeness, my love—only a likeness, that's all. It made me love the Florentine flower girl.'

'Oh, *me*, I suppose you mean. Why don't you speak out? No, I see no likeness. Nothing marble could be like me. Life, spirit, and colouring are my strong points.'

'No, my dear. You are quite right, of course; you always are right, you know; but I did not exactly mean you—not quite, I mean.'

'Who *do* you mean? For goodness' sake speak out, if you can,' said Rosalie, angry at her mistake.

'Oh nobody in particular; nobody at all that signifies,' said Mr. Archdale, cowed by her manner.

'But I insist on knowing. I will know. It must have been somebody. Tell me at once.'

'My dear, it really is nobody—nobody *alive*, I mean. Only my poor dear Lizzy.'

The statue still stood motionless before them, holding out her flowers. Rosalie put up her gold eyeglass, and answered carelessly, 'Cousin Liz! Poor old Liz! Not a bit—never a bit of likeness there. Old Liz was never so graceful or so sweet looking.'

'Lizzy was not so very old, my love. She was considered very graceful in her time.'

'Possibly. But if so, her time, as you call it, was over before I came. I only remember her as a model of prim propriety, always stiff, always a hundred, and generally cross,' was the scornful reply. 'But I wish you would not mention her. You know how nervous it always makes me, Mr. Archdale. She worried me in her life, and her death was the most horrid part of my life, and I won't have her mentioned.'

'As you like, my love,' said the submissive husband; 'but I am very glad you think the statue sweet and graceful. I thought you would. I bought it for you, my dear—to give you pleasure, and I am so glad you like it.'

'But I don't care twopence about it, Mr. Archdale, and I hate falsehoods. You know what I think of spending money on such things, and you only bought it for yourself. I would rather have had a bracelet or a necklace, and you know that well enough. However, I promised to say no more, so pray don't provoke me by that absurd humbug. Only remember, I don't care for it, and it is only graceful compared to Liz.'

The statue stood before them unmoved. The same sad expression on the still, white face; the flowers held out as before.

Then came the task of lifting it to its place, a niche in the beautiful old hall at Courtlands.

It was done. Mr. Archdale and the servants left the room. Mr. Archdale remained to walk up and down and dwell on the glorious beauty of form, feature, and expression before him. For a time he thus employed himself, and then he sank into a chair, and put one white and trembling hand over his eyes, with a deep sigh, which told of many a sad hour unshared, unsoothed; a sigh which went straight to Lizzie's breaking heart, and for the moment banished even her utter astonishment at the recognition of the wild, unmanageable child Rosy as her uncle's wife. How had such an event come about? She could only imagine that in the absence of any one to guide the house Rosalie had taken that duty upon herself, and had made herself necessary to Mr. Archdale's comfort. This was probably what had really occurred.

While these thoughts were passing through her mind, the hall-door burst open to admit two big boys; they were quarrelling, almost fighting, and the smallest of the two was crying bitterly. Mr. Archdale lifted up his hands deprecatingly: but they rushed up to him, and began noisily, and both together, to complain of one another.

'Boys, my dear boys, spare me, I entreat you—Basil, Arthur!'

'But, papa,——' and the torrent of angry complaint continued.

Could these be the well-trained children she had left? Times were, indeed, changed, when they dared to bring their quarrels into the presence of their invalid father.

She felt that she must have power to stop them. But, alas! it was in vain she strove for utterance, and she had to look on and listen, powerless to aid.

Basil had dropped a knife which had been given him, and was certain Arthur had picked it up. Both boys had been looking for it, and Arthur declared he had not seen it, and was as vehement in his denials as was Basil in his accusations. Mr. Archdale's agitation was painful, but neither of the boys regarded it; and engrossed by their own injuries, they were still talking in loud and angry tones, when Rosalie came lazily into the room.

Mr. Archdale appealed to her in a piteous voice, and she darted forward and administered to each boy a sharp box on the ear, joining her own voice in the clamour. None of the three paid the slightest attention to Mr. Archdale; but Lizzy heard plainly the low moan which became almost a cry as he sat trembling from head to foot. Her indignation and grief were so great that she almost fancied she moved, very, very slightly. It must have been fancy, however, for her position was unaltered. Ere long Rosalie and Basil left the room,

and Arthur threw himself on a sofa, crying bitterly. In days past his tears and his sorrows had been brought to Lizzy, and now he was sobbing out his heart within a yard of her, and she could not utter one pitying word; she could not lay her hand on his heated brow. By degrees his sobs ceased. He raised his head and looked cautiously round; his father, though still from time to time moaning, was, apparently, dozing. Arthur crept on tiptoe to the table, and after again looking cautiously around, opened a drawer, and, taking something from his pocket, looked long and lovingly at it, and then proceeded to put it as far back in the drawer as possible, covering it with papers. This did not satisfy him, however, for after a moment's thought he took it out again, and suddenly advancing to where Lizzy, in her enforced graceful attitude, stood watching him with an undefined dread, he carefully examined her drapery, evidently with a view to discover a good hiding-place for his treasure. In another minute the knife, the object of the dispute, was placed by the unhappy boy in a fold of her dress. Poor Lizzy! It was bitter pain. Was this the end of her careful training? What a return, what a welcome home was hers. At this moment she believed there could be no trial greater than her own.

It was a sorrow constantly kept alive; day after day was she forced to look upon the evil her absence had wrought. Her uncle would creep in alone to feast his eyes upon his last purchase. He would totter up and down before her, talking to himself in broken sentences which told of failing intellect, of a joyless, lonely old age, uncheered, unloved, yet clinging still to this life, with no thought of another. Rosalie would burst in with complaints and reproaches, bewildering him, and spoiling the only pleasure of which he was capable. Mary would sit there silent and sad, with a face which told its own tale of unhappiness. The boys never met without a quarrel, which often ended in a fight, in which Arthur was cruelly beaten. And worse, far worse than all, no day passed without a visit from Arthur to his hidden treasure. Sometimes two or three times in a day Lizzy had to see the child creep up and take his stolen knife from her very sleeve. He would gaze on it with an expression of slyness which it grieved her to see on the face she had loved so well. Sometimes when he had been well beaten by Basil, or snubbed by Rosalie, who hated him, he would creep to his treasure, and cry over it as if his heart would break, little dreaming of the loving heart breaking for him so close at hand. Whenever visitors came to the house, Mr. Archdale was certain to bring them to worship at the shrine of his favourite statue, calling upon all old friends to recognise the likeness to his lost niece. On these occasions Mrs. Archdale

never failed to contradict him with a most unbecoming display of temper.

Meanwhile, Lizzy could not help fancying that her limbs were less stiff than they had been. More than once she felt something give way. More than once she felt almost sure that she had moved, though very slightly. One morning she was certainly more lissome than she had felt before. There was a decided difference, and when a peal at the door-bell announced the arrival of a visitor, she almost fancied that she felt the weight of the basket on her arm.

The door opened to admit Mr. Sempton, and as he crossed the threshold, Lizzy *knew* that she tottered in her niche.

Without raising his eyes, he followed the butler to the drawing-room, but Lizzy heard him sigh deeply as he passed her. She tried, oh! how she tried to move. But it was as impossible as ever.

Soon voices were heard approaching. Her uncle and Mr. Sempton.

'It is a great pleasure, I assure you.' It was her uncle's feeble voice. 'The likeness is very great. One does not see it so much at first, perhaps. Mrs. Archdale don't see it at all. But it is very marked—very marked. It grows on one. There—wouldn't you almost say Elizabeth must have sat for that,' and they stood before her.

There was a painful silence. And once more Lizzy felt a sensation of returning life. Her heart—yes! her heart beat feebly—slowly—still perceptibly. Her lips quivered as the two whom she most loved gazed upon her face.

Mr. Sempton was very evidently trying to command himself.

'Don't you see it—is there not a likeness?' Mr. Archdale grew impatient.

'No, sir,' said Mr. Sempton, at length. 'I cannot say that I do. My Lizzy—Miss Archdale—never had so sad an expression.'

'Nay, but the features—the hair of the head—the——' Mr. Archdale stammered in his eagerness. But Mr. Sempton only shook his head. The discussion continued with impetuosity on one side and evident pain on the other, and each moment Lizzy felt returning life. Every tone of his voice penetrated to her heart, and the mysterious influence which had held her prisoner so long was fast vanishing. She almost fancied that if he would touch her it would be dispelled entirely. Either some slight but perceptible change did in reality take place in her expression, or Mr. Sempton wearied of the old man's pertinacity, for at length he changed his tone.

'You are right, sir,' said he, abruptly. 'I do now see a likeness. It does grow on one, as you say. But will you forgive me if I tell you that this is a painful subject. Those are buried memories.'

What was there in his words to send a pang through her heart? Was it a presentiment?

At this moment Rosalie entered, and Mr. Sempton's attention was turned to her. She received him graciously, and Lizzy learned that it was his first visit to Courtlands since her supposed death, and that he had been travelling or living abroad ever since that event. He took his leave not long after Rosalie's entrance.

Lizzy was certainly more life-like than before. Yet his last words respecting her had not only left a pain in her heart, but they had undone somewhat of the effect of his voice and presence.

A few days after this visit it was evident that company was expected. Lizzy could not hear who was coming, but she gathered that it was a visit which gave pain to Mr. Archdale, and had been arranged by his self-willed wife.

There was at Courtlands another entrance, by which more formal visitors usually entered, and Lizzy was therefore not surprised at hearing one day all the bustle of an arrival in the other part of the house. She knew that her uncle and Rosalie were out, and from the silence which followed she supposed the guests had retired to their rooms. Suddenly, however, a door opened, and a voice which she knew full well said, 'You remember this beautiful old hall. Let us go this way to the garden,' and Mr. Sempton and Miss Palgrave stood before her.

For one moment Lizzy grew more stone-like than ever, and then there was a strange quivering of vein and nerve which was more intense pain than anything she had before experienced. It was evident that Miss Palgrave was not less moved, though her agitation was shown in a different manner. Her eyes at once fell on the well-known statue, and she turned deadly white. Decidedly she had not expected to find it at Courtlands.

Mr. Sempton observed the direction of her eyes, but not her emotion.

'Ah,' said he, with a sigh. 'That is a statue Mr. Archdale saw in Rome, and afterwards bought from St. B. He raves about the likeness to our poor darling. Tell me, do you see it?'

As he spoke he drew her arm within his own, and Lizzy's murderess was forced to gaze upon her, supported by the man who would have shed his heart's blood to save that life.

And the statue? Calm and still the sad eyes gazed upon them, and the graceful form bent slightly forward, still holding the flowers towards them.

Unconsciously he talked on, unconscious of the tragedy in which he even then bore a part. He talked of Lizzy. He could talk of her,

he said, only to one who had loved her so well. He told of the pain his last visit to Courtlands had given him ; how ill he had endured old Mr. Archdale's conversation about her, how he should ever cherish her memory, even when he had other ties.

'I could not have married one who had never known her,' said he. The said eyes were still fixed upon them, but Lizzy was eagerly, eagerly looking. Was there a ring upon her finger? Could it be? Was she already his wife, or did his words contain but a pardonable confusion of tenses?

'I can seldom talk of her, even to you,' he continued, 'I can never even try to thank you for all you did for her. It is enough to know that you do not need thanks, that you did it all from pure love, and my life's devotion must be your thanks.'

For the first time he turned from that cold still statue, and looked in the face of his promised wife. Pre-occupied as he was, the expression of abject terror could but strike him.

'You are ill! you are tired. How selfish of me to keep you standing so long after your journey;' and the excitement of the moment drew from him words of endearment which he had never before addressed to Ellen Palgrave.

He drew a chair towards her and she sank into it unable to stand. Lizzy was at a loss to account for such agitation in one so practised in self-command. It inspired her with the most vivid hopes, and as it increased rather than diminished, her terror lest Mr. Sempton should leave the room to call for help, amounted almost to frenzy. Left alone but for five minutes with Miss Palgrave, she felt certain all hope had vanished for ever.

Her fears were justified. Miss Palgrave was apparently on the point of fainting, and George Sempton rushed off to call for help.

Hardly had the door closed upon him, before the whilome invalid arose, and approaching Lizzy, rapidly performed the well-known passes Powerless! Powerless!

They produced no effect whatever. Nay! Lizzy slightly moved. Miss Palgrave hastily drew a small bottle from her pocket, and mounting on a chair, prepared, Lizzy doubted not, to pour the contents in her ear as before. It was a moment of fearful suspense. Was, then, escape so near—hope, life, happiness—only to be dashed for ever from her path. There was a noise at the door. Miss Palgrave's agitation, never wholly assumed, now returned, and her trembling hand let the bottle fall. She took it up. Not one drop was left. Once again, summoning all her energies, she attempted the passes. In vain, Lizzy's eye grew lifelike, and steadily and sternly regarded her prosecutor.

The wretched girl wrung her hands in agony.

Voices were heard approaching. Suddenly collecting herself once more, she laid hand on the statue, and for the first time, though in trembling accents.

'You may have your revenge. For one short hour you may live—may regain his love—and then you die. No human being living as you have lived, suffering as you have suffered for five years past, could take up again the thread of active life. For one short hour—one hour of bodily agony you may live—and then—death. There is but one chance, one hope—resign yourself to my will. Promise to give him up, I can save you—I alone.'

Not for one second would Lizzy have hesitated, even had there been time, but there was none. Mr. Sempton was already in the room. With eyes and ears only for the living, he advanced towards Miss Palgrave, and as he did so he accidentally placed his hand on the statue.

'George!'

Whence that strange, hoarse voice?

It thrilled through both hearers like a voice from the dead. And white as the dead, George Sempton turned to the tottering statue.

'George!'

Ellen Palgrave sank to the ground, and buried her face in her trembling hands, waiting, waiting for the end.

'George!' said the voice once more, for Mr. Sempton stood still in excess of amazement.

And as the door opened to admit Mr. and Mrs. Archdale, that still, calm statue fell—not forward with a crash as of a marble image, but softly, slowly collapsing as a human being.

Were their eyes deceiving them? Could it be possible that they looked once more upon her—the long buried—the dead?

There was one full moment of silence, awful in its solemnity. It was broken by that voice which they had all believed long silent in the grave. Yet not all. One was there who cowered beneath her guilty knowledge of the truth.

'Save me from her! George Sempton! Save me, save me!' and then shriek after shriek rent the air as Mrs. Archdale fell back in violent hysterics.

All was confusion. Mr. Archdale, moaning feebly, caught hold of his helpless wife, while George Sempton, giddy, bewildered, unable to credit his senses, lifted the long-lost one from her pedestal, and placed her on the very sofa where she had been laid on the day when she was brought home to die.

And invigorated by his touch, Lizzy Archdale sat up once more among those she had loved.

What a return ! There she sat in her strange foreign dress, her hand held by him whose wife she was to have been, and at their feet crouched the shame-stricken woman whom he had now promised to marry.

George Sempton was the only person present who retained anything like composure, and it was not without effort that he commanded himself sufficiently to direct the agitated household. Mrs. Archdale was carried to her room, and as the door closed upon her her husband fell backwards with a cry which struck additional terror to every heart. At the sound Lizzy attempted to spring to his assistance, but in vain. Her weakness was so overpowering that she could not even stand ; and she had to see him taken away without the power of following him.

That night he died. But Lizzy knew it not, for she was herself at death's door, and it may well be imagined that it was long ere she recovered. That she did recover was marvellous, and for very long her weakness was excessive, and the pains in her limbs excruciating. Even speaking was painful to her, and any exertion impossible.

At length she was pronounced well, and then, though still suffering, she tried to return to so much of her old life as was possible under the altered circumstances. But it would not do. One and all shrank from her as from a visitor from another world. She would gladly have comforted Rosalie in her sorrow, but Rosalie's horror at her presence was without attempt at concealment. The servants shunned her, the children were afraid of her. Only George Sempton was left to her.

And he ? Ah, this was the most bitter trial of all. This was what she touched upon most lightly. The love which he had cherished for her memory faded, drooped, and finally vanished in her new presence. The engagement was resumed, but it was too plain to her that he, as well as all others connected with her former life, experienced an irresistible sensation of repugnance in her company. It almost seemed as if they could not believe her story, although every proof was forthcoming. They still felt as though she had risen from the dead. George Sempton, after hearing her wellnigh incredible tale, had spared no pains to establish each proof. The coffin was examined and found to be filled with stones. Indeed, Miss Palgrave, under the influence of the man she loved, made her wretched confession. The art of suspending animation for a lengthened period, without destroying life, is one which has at least been suspected and imagined to exist. George Sempton had heard and read of it. But the prejudice was not to be overcome.

Ellen Palgrave had not come to Courtlands with any expectation of

finding there the lost statue. For neither she or Herr Baulein had any idea of what had been its fate. Miss Palgrave had, in fact, long quitted Herr Baulein's service in pursuit of George Sempton, and contriving, under the chaperonage of an aunt, adopted for the time, to meet him constantly, had at length succeeded in bringing about an engagement, by working upon his attachment to Lizzy's memory. On his first visit to Courtlands he could not find it in his heart to mention his situation with regard to Miss Palgrave. He had made the announcement by letter, and Rosalie, with her usual caprice, had, much against her husband's wishes, insisted upon inviting Mr. Sempton and Miss Palgrave to meet at Courtlands, although governess and pupil had parted on the worst of terms.

Only a few days before the visit so fatal to her schemes, Miss Palgrave had received a letter from Herr Baulein, a letter which had travelled over half the world in search of her. He announced that he had just learnt, with the greatest alarm, that the statue, in which they were both so peculiarly interested, and which he had imagined safely located at Courtlands, had been resold before reaching that place. All efforts to trace it failed utterly, and the gravest fears must be entertained, for, as Miss Palgrave well knew, 'the flower girl' had never been pronounced 'safe for sale,' owing probably to the counter influence which had so long opposed all efforts at obtaining complete power over her. In other words, the petrefaction had never been complete, and the dangers of at least partial return to life was great. It was, Miss Palgrave confessed, for that reason that Herr Baulein had put on his favourite statue so high a price, that he judged it next to impossible she should be sold. He had hoped that time would work the desired effect, and that as the memory of George Sempton faded in her mind other influences would gain ground, and that he might eventually dispose of her to advantage. Although vexed to find she had been sold in his absence, he was not much alarmed until on seeking her supposed home for the purpose of making all safe for the time he found, to his horror, that she had been resold.

All this Mr. Sempton related to Lizzy almost as soon as he was allowed to see her after her illness. He shortly after went to Rome, and on his return he had to tell her of the utter failure of all his efforts to bring Herr Baulein to justice. The story was simply laughed at, and Mr. Sempton himself looked upon as a madman.

When Mr. Archdale's affairs were arranged, poor Lizzy could no longer conceal from herself that she was terribly in the way in her old home. For her there was of course no provision, and Rosalie at length plainly told her that her presence was an oppression. Lizzy felt that she must exert herself. Her first step was to release George

Sempton from his engagement. It was a painful task. She did not reproach him for a change which she plainly saw was involuntary; but she set him at liberty, and took upon herself the onus of the parting.

'I have lived my life,' said she; 'sad and strange as it has been—it has been my life; I cannot begin another. I can never take part in real active life again. If I live half a century it can be but weary waiting for the stroke that shall release me.'

He was deeply touched. He even implored her to renounce her resolution. He confessed to the feeling of constraint which she had discerned in him when in his presence, and he rightly attributed it to the extraordinary nature of her story, and was certain it would pass away. He had never loved anyone but herself. He should never love again. She was, however, firm, and they parted.

Poor Lizzy went forth alone into the cold world, to live out her sad life. The only kindness which was shown her she owed to George Sempton, for his influence shamed Rosalie into allowing a small sum to be settled on her. It was, however, not enough to afford her all the comforts that her ruined health demanded, and she had recourse to her favourite art. She led a wandering life, with courage neither for solitude, or for forming new friendships. When long stationary, she was haunted by an idea that she should again turn to marble. It seemed to her that safety could only be found in crowded places, and in constantly moving from place to place.

Miss Palgrave had not long survived her disgrace, and Lizzy had Herr Baulien alone to dread. More than once she had encountered him, but he had never recognised her. She was always warned of his approach by the increased sensation of languor which oppressed her. On these occasions she moved and spoke with difficulty, feeling as though her limbs were weighted with lead.

Miss Archdale had never told her tale to any human being, and she was right, for it was one hard to believe. The conviction that Herr Baulien had selected her as a victim, had at length induced her to open her lips, to warn one who had shown her some kindness.

It would be difficult to tell all I felt on hearing this extraordinary tale, for I passed through nearly every possible vicissitude of feeling—from utter incredulity to intense indignation, and determination not to leave a stone unturned until I had defeated the horrible machinations of Herr Baulien, and set free the many poor victims who might still be suffering all the tortures so graphically described by my poor friend.

Certainly this was the point at which I had arrived when she ceased speaking, and I eagerly asked if there was no way of counteracting his power over them.

'There is,' says she, with hesitation, 'but it is one of fearful risk.'

'To whom?'

'To the person who attempts it, and yet but for the languor which makes me quite incapable of exertion, I must have tried it, for the thought of all that suffering is fearful.'

I pressed for particulars, and she told me that while in Herr Baulein's studio she had accidentally learned the only means by which a human being once pronounced in their significant and horrible language 'safe for sale,' could be restored to life.

If one or two drops of a certain fluid could be dropped into the ear animation would be almost instantaneous. She told me the names of the ingredients, and the address of the only chemist who could furnish them.

'But,' she added, 'to procure them you will need a permit from the authorities, and to gain this you must prove your need of them. And who will believe the tale?'

'Who, indeed!' said I; 'but difficulties of this kind I do not fear. What I do fear is the utter impossibility of touching even one statue—of doing the work before Herr Baulein can stop me.'

'There is another way,' said she, with yet more hesitation, 'if any one has courage to raise a tiny valve,—the situation of which in the studio I can exactly describe,—and nerve enough steadily to pour in the whole of the fluid without spilling one drop, it will circulate rapidly round the room, and every *living* statue will at once *return to life*.'

'And what is the danger?'

'Death!'

'And how?'

'If but one drop rests on the edge, if but one half drop touches the hand, it is death, not only to the person who holds it, but to all who touch or approach that person after death.'

I paused. It was a risk. I thought of the possible result, and trembled.

I thought of the human beings groaning under a bondage so terrible and I resolved.

'I will do it,' said I; 'I will succeed. Explain to me—First, how it is to be done; secondly, by what means Herr Baulein will attempt to petrify me.'

'The room is surrounded by pipes, apparently for hot water, which are however kept filled with the petrifying liquid which is thus communicated to each statue,' she answered. 'This can only be counteracted by the preparation which I have just named to you. The revival will be instantaneous, and perfect in all cases but two. One, when like myself the victims have been partially or entirely

subdued by mesmerism in the first instance; the other, when their shapes have actually been contorted, as is too often the case. But this is too horrible; I cannot dwell on it. You will see for yourself. Let me now answer your second question. You are, I should imagine, no subject for mesmerism, but Herr Baulein will make the attempt, either himself or by some of his agents. Failing this, he will make himself most agreeable, his object being to attract you to Rome, to his studio. Either there or elsewhere he will show you some photographs, curiously minute, and will lend you a glass of peculiar make, which you will be told to press firmly on the eye. Beware how you do this. The glass contains, and will convey to your brain, the poison which will place you in his power. If he succeeds in this his course will be guided by circumstances, but you will be lost."

Miss Archdale's exhaustion now became so great that I would hear no more. I had, in fact, acquired all necessary information, and I left her in a whirl of thought, which solitude alone could quiet.

I felt that I should need all my caution and more than all my strength, both of body and mind, to accomplish the task I had in view. My first object was to convey Miss Archdale to a place of safety. My second to disarm Herr Baulein of all possible suspicion. After some persuasion I induced my poor friend to await me in my own home, and I lost no time in starting her on her journey. For Herr Baulein I played my part fairly well. Plainly letting him perceive that I was no subject for mesmerism, I yet received most graciously his attentions.

It was a hard task. One of the hardest I have ever had to perform, for you may well believe how I shrank from the sound of that mild, cruel voice, from the glance of that meek, pitiless eye, from the touch of that soft hand which had dealt a living death to so many. I shortened the time as much as I could. I professed great interest in his art, and I let myself be persuaded to visit Rome at no distant period. And with this promise we parted.

My next work was one of far more difficulty, though infinitely less disagreeable personally. I will not weary you with an account of my progress, of the means I took to gain what I required, of the rebuffs I encountered, the derision, the contempt. I persevered. I was a woman, rich and determined, as you know, not without influence in high quarters.

At the appointed time I was in Rome, and when I met Herr Baulein in his own studio I not only held in my hand the bottle containing the required mixture, but I was accompanied by a friend, who, if he did not actually credit my tale, was sufficiently interested in the event to lend me his aid.

I would not, however, give up to him what I considered at once the privilege and the risk of emptying the vial, though I was so nervous that I believe I quite expected death to be the result of my own endeavours.

I entered the studio with Herr Baulein and my friend. I walked round the room, so agitated that I could hardly distinguish one statue from another. I feigned admiration as well as I was able.

As Miss Archdale had foretold, the photographs were produced. I had purposely placed myself close to the valve described to me. Herr Baulein offered me the glass, and impressed upon me the necessity of holding it firmly on my eyes.

My agitation was so great that I was fearful he would perceive it. I took the glass, holding it carelessly in one hand, talking rapidly, occasionally making as though I would raise it to my eyes, and then suddenly turning round with another question or remark.

Herr Baulein walked impatiently away a few steps. Without the delay of a second, I dropped the glass, and rapidly opening the valve, was on the point of emptying the vial, when alas! he turned! He saw me. He sprang forward, and seized me by the arm, with an oath.

I fainted. But at the same moment my friend snatched hold of the vial, and quietly and deftly turned the contents into the valve.

Herr Baulein flung me from him with a force which brought me to myself. He sprang to the door. My friend was before him. There was a short, sharp struggle. It seemed as though Herr Baulein had the best of it, when—I know not what impelled me, one of those impulses which it is impossible to resist, I rushed forward, seized the glass, and pressed it firmly on Herr Baulein's face.

The effect was instantaneous. He became motionless, even in an attitude of resistance. I dropped the glass, and turned to behold probably the most extraordinary scene ever witnessed.

The room, one minute before all but empty of human life, still and silent, was now full.

Statue after statue in a moment endued with life stepped down from pedestals, or darted forward in all the strange bewilderment of so sudden a change.

We were surrounded. Voices in every language, some hoarse from the silence of years, were thanking us, blessing us, begging for further help, for advice, complaining, lamenting. Some, alas! reviling the one silent figure, which still in a fighting attitude half stood, half knelt in their midst.

I was completely overcome, and too thankful that I was not alone. The only figures I can distinctly recall in that medley are those of more than one quaint image.

How can I tell it. Lizzy's last mysterious words came to my mind, and subsequent explanations verified her account.

There were people in whom Herr Baulein had discerned strange likenesses to things inanimate, and whom he had actually tortured and shaped into the forms which they had suggested to his mind. Works of art they were!

Works of agony—of living agony. Never again could they resume the human form and take their former places among men. They must ever remain living, grotesque figures of flesh and blood!

How I escaped from the crowd I cannot tell. My friend extricated me. I only know that for many subsequent days I was on a sick bed.

When I recovered I found myself a heroine. The excitement in Rome was intense. Fortunately I was too really busy to suffer from my prominent position. Heroines are generally idle, at least when they arrive at the climax of their fame. I, on the contrary, had work to perform. I had to find out the histories of and in every possible way to assist those whom I had been the means of rescuing from a fate so horrible.

One and all came to see me and to thank me. All save those sad injured ones. I begged Mr. —— to spare me the pain of seeing them again, and it was by mistake that Maxsy and Paxsy were introduced to my apartments. A happy mistake for us all. My friends have often laughingly likened them to grotesque china images, little dreaming how near this was to the truth.

What they suffered I cannot attempt to relate. They pleased me, they touched me; for in their lowliness and misery they humbly implored me to restore them to marble life, as a lesser evil than their present helplessness. Of all those rescued, they alone were friendless and penniless. I took them home with me. They have never left me since, and by their love and devotion have more than repaid the service I rendered them. And this is all I have to tell you of my meeting with the twin dwarfs Maxsy and Paxsy.

Elizabeth Archdale is still alive, still painting portraits occasionally. Hundreds have sat to her—hundreds with aching hearts and ruined lives, perhaps, but I doubt if one could tell a tale of sorrow so deep, so hopeless as her own.

THE ORPHAN'S WRONG.

BY FRANCIS PEEK.

II.

SCORNE TO DEATH.

THE melancholy condition of those children who are brought up in workhouses, the dreary hopelessness of their childhood, and that corruption of their character as they grow up, which is produced by the pauper associations and vicious associates surrounding them, and lastly, the disastrous result of this training, as shown by the future history of a large majority of those whose career can be traced, have been fully described. In exceptional cases their lot is, no doubt, ameliorated by the extreme kindness of some matrons, and by the visits of tender-hearted ladies, who seek them out in their gloomy abodes; but so utterly bad and unsuitable is the workhouse system, that it is open to question whether even this amelioration is not in its result a cruelty. The following true account will illustrate the miserable condition of pauper-bred orphans, even when kindness has done all it can to improve it. Some ten or twelve years ago there was (says the writer) in our workhouse a very good little girl, an orphan. I knew the child personally. She was about thirteen years of age, and had been in the workhouse some few years when she was sent out for a month upon trial as servant in a respectable place in the little town of Highworth. At the end of three weeks she came away from her place and returned to the workhouse. The matron, who was deservedly beloved by all who knew her, went to the little girl and kindly talked to her, saying she had not expected such conduct from her; she had always been such a good, obedient child. 'I could not stay, ma'am, oh, I could not stay!' said the poor child, 'they scorned me so.' 'Who scorned you so?' said the matron. 'The children of the town,' replied the poor orphan.

Within a few days after this the little girl began to droop, and not many weeks afterwards was numbered among the dead. The matron said she believed the child died of a broken heart, because 'they scorned her so.'

While in ten thousand English homes mothers were rejoicing over their happy children, rejoicing with perhaps a shade of sadness as the thought passed through their minds how sad it would be for these if death should deprive them while young of their mother's care and affection.

While from millions of devout churchgoers the prayer was ascending that God would have mercy on all fatherless children, this desolate, destitute orphan was breaking her young heart, 'scorned to death.'

But who was responsible for this cruel crime? Were the village children? No; they only applied (without discrimination) the feelings of their parents towards paupers as a class. Were, then, the parents of these children? No, they had only in their children's hearing expressed the noble-hearted indignation of the honest, industrious English workman against those who *willingly* eat the bread of idleness and dependence, and their knowledge of the base characters of the majority of those who make the workhouse their home. Rather those are guilty of the crime who without protest and without effort allow innocent, destitute orphans of the poor to be degraded to a pauper's life in a workhouse home.

If there were no alternative, it would be a question of some difficulty to decide: whether it is worth while providing for these children at all, if nothing better than the fate before described was to be secured for them—rather leave them to Christian charity; or, failing that, to the care of the Great Father, whose interference the Church so constantly invokes, than to the dreariness of the workhouse union, the degradation of its education, and the ruinous nature of its result. But there are two alternatives ready to our hand.

We may, in the first place, bring them up in district schools—of these there are already several, and mostly well managed. This plan, however, is open to several objections.

Firstly, that the congregation of large masses of children—mostly of the pauper class—together, is acknowledged by all who have studied the subject to be very injurious; tending, as is natural, to prevent them from having the desire even to rise above this class.

Secondly, the want of any separation of the permanent from the casual children; viz., those whose parents are constantly passing from haunts of vice to the workhouse, and back again to those dens of evil, and whose children follow them, thus forcing the orphans into constant contact and association with the greatest depravity, the

physical effect showing itself from time to time in fearful outbreaks of loathsome diseases in these schools.

Thirdly, the very discipline and organization absolutely necessary when such large numbers are gathered together is injurious to the development of character in a child, its whole time being constantly spent under this discipline without any break by the freedom of a home during holidays. They, as a rule, become dull and spiritless, as might be expected, and consequently unable to battle with the world when sent out to sustain themselves.

The above might, no doubt, be obviated, or, at least, mitigated, by having separate smaller schools for orphans, and joining industrial training to their education; and it is to be sincerely hoped that this plan will be adopted in all the schools now existing, but there will still remain two great objections, viz., that the children have no home influence, and when they have gone out to service, no home, in case of misfortune, to return to but the workhouse. The cost of these schools is also excessive, and a great wrong is thus done to many a struggling ratepayer who is paying twice as much for these children than he can afford for his own. The following is the cost in the principal district schools :

	£	s.	d.	
South Metropolitan . . .	18	15	2	per child per year.
North Surrey	16	2	6	do.
Swinton, near Manchester,	16	9	0	do.

This is independent of expenses of the large staff, the cost of buildings, &c., which will bring the cost of each child up to at least 12 *shillings* per week.

The alternative way of dealing with these helpless, destitute orphans is well illustrated by a French fable : A labourer, painfully anxious about the fate of his little family should death take him away, one day found in a bush two birds' nests near each other. Constantly he watched them, till one day a hawk pounced upon and destroyed the parent birds belonging to one of them. Sadly distressed, thinking that the fate of the little birds betokened the fate of his own little children when he was no more, he kept from the place for some time, but at last was drawn to look at the nest, expecting to find the fledgelings starved to death ; but, to his surprise, they were alive and healthy. Standing by in astonishment he saw the parents of the other brood equally distribute the food they brought between their own young ones and the orphan birds, and took comfort (for in that country there is no workhouse), believing that the great Father would in such extremity provide in a similar way for his own children.

Such is the natural plan of caring for our destitute orphans. Their

own parents being gone, find them foster-parents from among their own class. This is no new, untried system; it has been tried for years in Scotland, and those brought up by it have had time to test its value. The following is the testimony of the officials who have watched its working, and one of whom was at first opposed to it.

Mr. Adamson states that, of 923 boarded out by the Glasgow Union, only 40 have been lost sight of, while less than five per cent. turned out badly. Mr. Greig, clerk to the Edinburgh Parochial Board, says 'it is a rare thing for a child who has been brought up in this way to become chargeable to the parish in after life.'

After 20 years' experience, the guardians of the poor in Dublin have petitioned in favour of an extension of the time the children are allowed to remain with their foster parents.

The happiest results have followed from the introduction of boarding-out.

The Windermere Committee state that the anxiety of the committee who undertook to supervise the children was at first considerable, but quickly diminished as they found how soon the little ones became loved as members of the family.

This is indeed the great encouragement to those struggling, against prejudice and obstructiveness, for the extension of the boarding-out system. They know that gradually children are being boarded out; and almost every child thus treated finds a real home. Numerous are the cases where foster parents have altogether adopted the children; and almost universal is the testimony that, especially when placed out young, the mutual attachment between them and their foster parents becomes so strong that when they leave to go out to service, there is always a real home to which they can return. And as regards expense, no system is so economical; the comparative cost being from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. per week, as against 5s. 6d. to 6s. in workhouses, and 6s. 6d. to 12s. in district schools.

The objections raised to the system seem really to arise from ignorance of its working. It has been argued, for instance, that homes cannot be found; the answer to this is that there are numbers waiting, but, owing to the resistance of boards of guardians, children cannot be obtained.

It is also argued that the children would be neglected or ill-treated as under the old farming-out system. But the system of supervision required by the Poor Law Board precludes this danger, while the establishment of ladies' committees brings rich and poor together in the happiest intercourse.

Mr. Goschen's order provides as follows: 'Orphan and deserted children may be boarded out, provided a committee of two or more

ladies approved by the Government Board undertakes the superintendence of them. The Poor Law officer is also bound to see they are well cared for, and that the homes are suitable. The maximum sum allowed is 4s. per week per child, exclusive of payment for clothing and education. The travelling expenses are also paid by the guardians, and the children are required to attend school.' Under these conditions, it is hardly possible but that the children shall be well cared for, and they form a most useful bond of union between the ladies and the poor; the common bond of sympathy and kindly feeling for the desolate orphan, which the one adopts for a moderate remuneration, and the ladies of the boarding-out committee regard as their charge; they constitute a tender link between the cottage and the hall; while the sympathies of the ladies are excited on behalf of their helpless charge, and it finds not only foster parents, but kind friends, whose sympathy and assistance when it goes out into the world is invaluable. Surely, with such a system waiting to be adopted, kindly to the poor children in their childhood, most successful, wherever it has been tried, in training them for a future life of usefulness, economical in its present working, and doubly so by cutting off the entail of pauperism, it is the height of madness to continue the present prevailing system of workhouse rearing, and yet, though hundreds of homes are now waiting for foster children, guardians will not give way to this *new-fangled* plan, and thousands of desolate, destitute orphans pay the sad penalty of their guardians' obstinacy. But what right has the nation thus to treat the poor children of the State? Is there nothing in the word home? Do not hearts want cultivating as well as heads? At the present time there is a loud outcry for honest, able-bodied, intelligent men, and useful, faithful domestic servants; during the past 20 years about 100,000 orphans, or deserted children, who might have helped to supply the want, have been brought up as paupers to fill our workhouses and prisons, or flaunt their shameless finery in the streets of our large towns, a vivid illustration of the great truth, that with what measure we meet it shall be measured to us again. We plant these orphans in a corrupt soil, and reap a just retribution in a harvest of crime.

There is, to an English ear, no word sweeter than that of home; it is a word so full of suggestive association that it often causes the tear to roll down the rugged cheek of England's exiles toiling in long banishment at the extremities of the earth; it is the word which (where one has been enjoyed) sooner than any other, except that of mother, softens the heart of the outcast woman. The home is the great barrier which, more than any other cause, restrains the great flood of selfishness and vice from overwhelming society, and making

patriotism but a name to cover selfish pride and covetousness, as in other countries where the name is unknown. By what right, then, do we refuse to our destitute orphans the comfort, joy, and benefits that this most English of words implies?

What is the worth of the kindness, wisdom, or religion of those who, looking at the gaol-like workhouse, and thinking of the poor orphan children dragging out their dreary childhood within its walls, can pass by on the other side without an effort to rescue and restore them to home and love?

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STRONG MAGIC.

CHAPTER I.

It is just a year to-day since mother died; and how much my life has altered since the dreary autumn Saturday afternoon, which saw her dear white self hidden away from the sight of man, among the strange cold dead in Kensal Green Cemetery. How chill my world was then; without a soul to care for me, or be cared for by me, with grim, ugly realities to be faced and conquered, with a future as blank as a prison wall. Ah! that was a bad time.

We Yescombes arn't a lucky race, *sui generis*, at least until I was born. From father to son for ages the same wild temper has marred the prospects of our men, and made our women miserable. I suppose in the old days we used to ruffle it with the best gentlemen in the land; for Yescombe, the family estate, sold to a big brewer about fifty years ago by my father's father, was a very fine old place, and had been finer: nevertheless, I can't remember the day when there was an odd farthing to spare in the family purse, and have frequently had occasion to doubt the presence of farthings at all.

Guided by this circumstance, you will perceive that my father, poor dear man, inherited the talent of his forbears for getting into trouble; and the trouble he got into was a deal worse than any which had hitherto been recorded in the family chronicles.

I don't fancy mother was quite his equal in birth—perhaps chance sayings and doings at home first gave me this impression; but assuredly no grandee, however grand, could have made him a sweeter, lovelier, more steadfast wife, and she was sorely tried. Yes! even before our great grief fell upon us.

And our great grief, what was that?

I will try to tell you as briefly as possible.

When I was about seven years old, my father, by profession a solicitor, became entangled in speculation, and being one day at a loss

for funds wherewith to carry out a scheme whence he hoped to derive immense profits, he raised the necessary money on some deeds which had been entrusted to his care by a client of his called Mr. Henry Bertram. Now I fully believe he intended to repay the loan and release the deeds directly this negotiation was concluded; but with the perversity common to mundane events, when their fortuitous course is of more than usual importance, nothing happened as my poor father thought it would, and a general smash was the result; this was bad enough, but there was worse to follow. Before long the use he had made of the missing deeds was discovered, and Mr. Bertram instituted a prosecution for abuse of trust, which placed him in the prisoners' dock at the ensuing county assizes, and ultimately consigned him to Portland, there to work out a sentence of ten years' penal servitude. Judge how mother suffered, and how I, child though I was, suffered with her. We were living in Somersetshire then, in a small country town given up to illnatured gossip and canting hypocrisy. Of course to remain there was an impossibility after disgrace had wound itself about us like a cloak; so we turned our shabby backs on all our pitying foes, and unencumbered by any surplus of personal belongings, the furniture having been seized and sold prior to my father's arrest, started forthwith for London. Mother, I know, fretted and grieved over the change, the great change in our surroundings. I, on the contrary, rather liked that hand to mouth lodging-house existence in Bayswater; but it used to worry me all the same to see her sweet face stained with tears, and her pretty grey eyes dim and dull when I came home from school, day after day. Then when my father's letters came, you see he couldn't quite keep the prison out of them, though I'm sure he tried to for our sake; well, on those mornings, everything used to seem doubly wretched, for although mother liked to hear from him, the thought of where he was hurt her worse when it took substance in the shape of that hateful postmark. Her days were so dull too, for of money for amusements we had none, indeed it was hard work sometimes to procure absolute necessities, a hundred and twenty pounds a year not being by any means a lavish allowance for two people, and a hundred and twenty pounds constituting the sum total of our annual income, of which the twenty pounds was contributed by mother and the hundred pounds by Cousin Frank, who is an old bachelor and a barrister, and the very best and dearest of—— But I mustn't.

I believe I was sixteen all but a week, when the thought of earning my own living first presented itself to me with any degree of force; at all events I know it was on the afternoon of my sixteenth birthday that I first spoke to mother of my plans for the future, despite the

poor dear's earnest entreaties that I would not spoil the happiest day in the year by forcing her to think of the time when her darling Nellie must fight her own battle among strangers.

'But mother, dear, you know Cousin Frank won't care to keep me as a lady at large much longer, and I'd rather put on the yoke myself than have it fixed on my shoulders by any one else,' said I, in reply to her tender arguments. Mother shook her head.

'You're too proud, my child,' sighed she. 'This is a very hard world for sensitive beggars.'

'For beggars, yes! for workers, no!' and I remember feeling as strong as a Pythoness and as defiant as a Maria Theresa, despite my diminutive five feet three of weakly mortality.

'Well, what work do you think of attempting?' She smiled after a while, when my energy had somewhat evaporated. 'You can be a governess, of course!'

'No indeed, I can't. I've no more idea of teaching horrid children how to do addition sums, or make pothooks, than I have of flying,' answered I hastily, getting remarkably red.

'Ah, I thought you were not quite prepared to leave me!' stroking my podgy little hands with calm content.

'Not to leave you, darling!' said I, feeling very like crying at the bare mention of such a misery; 'but to make you more comfortable, to give you some money to spend, and a few little pleasures. Mother, I'll tell you my secret—I want to be a pianiste. You've often said that I have a talent for music, and you know how I adore art; do let us try to persuade Cousin Frank to let me go to the Royal Academy. Now do, there's a dear, dear creature!'

How annoyed she was to be sure, and how hard she did try to persuade me that musical people were low, unprincipled beings, utterly tabooed by respectable society.

'Look at Mendelssohn!' I cried, flourishing the G minor concerto, 'look at Beethoven, look at Mozart! Is it not a splendid thought to be one with them in soul?' But mother would not be shaken from her firm conviction that the past was not the present, neither the few the many; and although she allowed me to ask Cousin Frank's assistance, I could see that she in her own heart hoped he would say no. How anxious I was until his answer came. What was it? Well, it was a modified 'Yes.' He liked my desire to be up and doing, he also liked the notion of an actual profession, but he desired the testimony of competent judges as to my musical abilities before he proceeded farther in the matter. Mother's face fell as I read out Mr. Yescombe's long, carefully written letter, and for the first time in my life I found her disinclined to interest herself on my behalf. At length, however,

I, unaided, procured three favourable testimonials from professors of music, and thus fortified, presented myself duly to Cousin Frank, who gave me a kiss, a five pound note, and a promise to do his best to help me on in the pursuit of my new vocation. He kept his word. I entered the Royal Academy as a pianoforte student, at the commencement of the Michaelmas term. For the first six weeks it was dull work enough, but by degrees I gained some little command over my fingers, and by the end of the second term had played my first concerto, a rondo by Hummel, to which dear mother listened with such a beatified expression on her sweet face that I was well repaid for all the agonies of terror I endured during its performance. Yes, she was quite reconciled to my wilful choice by then, and cheerfully underwent any amount of finger exercises daily without the veriest *souçon* of a grumble.

Oh! we were so happy, mother and I, that one short year, but, alas, our joy soon came to a terrible close.

One Sunday, late in August. the dear soul caught a cold by sitting in church in wet clothes, for, although an active, purely religious woman, she held firmly to the somewhat formalistic belief in which she had been reared, *i. e.*, that to miss the hebdomadal sermon was a dire calamity, not to be lightly incurred out of consideration for pelting rain or possible illness. Well, a cold in this climate gets less attention than it deserves, and mother declaring she was perfectly well, ventured out right into the teeth of an east wind before the end of the week, despite my protestations that she was acting most unwisely.

Naturally her cough grew worse, bronchitis ensued, and by the last day of September she had vanished from off the face of the earth. I can't write about her death; I scarcely dare think of it. My poor darling, how she prayed for me the night she sank to rest. How she looked her life away into my hot dry eyes, for I could't cry then. Ah! these things are best kept between me and God.

CHAPTER II.

EVERYONE was very kind to me in my desolation. Cousin Frank, especially, did his utmost to alleviate the horrors of my forlorn condition, and during those first dreadful days I was quite thankful to see his pleasant red face when he called of an afternoon. My father's answer to the letter in which I told him of our loss intensified my bitter misery, for by it I learnt how he had hoped to get his discharge on New Year's Day, and how he had been longing, agonising, to clasp my mother and me to his breast once more. Now ———. Yes!



DRAWN BY D. H. FRISTON.

ENGRAVED BY C. M. JENKIN.

'STRONG MAGIC.'



that letter drove me nearly frantic ; and I could get no rest, no peace until I had shown it to cousin Frank, and asked his advice as to what I had better do, where I had better go to. I didn't care a button what became of me at that sorry time.

'Well! my dear,' hesitated my counsellor in reply to my weary inquiries; 'You see, er—you can't live on here alone until your poor father is at liberty to join you; and a boarding-house is not a desirable residence for a young lady so excessively—er—pretty as yourself—er——.'

I stared at him with my lacklustre eyes.

'Good gracious! he must have taken leave of his senses, to call my cadaverous countenance, pretty!' was my reflection; and I was cadaverous then. A small, fair-headed, white girl, weighed down by the heaviest of hearts, and sombrest of mourning garments.

Cousin Frank fidgetted himself off to the fireplace and back again before he resumed his remarks.

'Do you think you are a sufficiently good musician to undertake a situation as a musical governess?' he said, presently.

'Yes,' I answered with considerable promptitude; 'Do you know of such a thing?'

'Not at present! not at present! But an advertisement in the *Times* might be of service. Of course, I fully intended to allow you another year at the Academy—but——.'

'That's all over now!' I exclaimed, with the savage vehemence of seventeen when cheated by Fate out of its dearest ambition.

Cousin Frank looked somewhat alarmed at my tone, and cleared his throat eloquently.

Feeling penitent and utterly wretched, I begged his pardon, and promised to act entirely as he thought for the best, in such a meek and humble fashion that he was fain to be conciliated, and speedily departed to draw up a careful statement of my acquirements for the edification of the readers of the 'Want Situations' column in to-morrow's *Times*.

So then I was to be a governess after all. Well! it didn't hurt me much to make that humiliating acknowledgment; indeed, I believe I had not the slightest wish to keep on in my present groove. The atmosphere round and about me was damp with tears, the streets were full of hearses. I wanted a change, I wanted active duties to force me into repressing my own feelings. I wanted fresh interests, and I was to have them. Lucky I! Also, a regular salary would enable me to save money wherewith to help my father when he should have cast off the vile prison garb. How I rejoiced at the nearness of his freedom; and yet I knew we both had a long journey against the collar

before us, where to end, or how, God alone knew. Two days dragged themselves out; two sickly miry days, when the outer world was an abomination and everything indoors put on its dingiest aspect. I practised as well as I could, but the salt of my life had lost its savour; and etude, fugue, sonata, nocturne, all alike hammered out the humdrum question, 'Whatever shall I do if no one answers Cousin Frank's advertisement?' 'Go into a shop!' suggested my tired mind. On further reflection, however, I perceived that I was by nature singularly unfitted for *une dame du comptoir*. One of those magnificent black silk dresses, so elegantly supported by the young ladies who exhibit mantles, and invigorate languid customers, at the first-rate West-end linen-draper, would smother me hopelessly. A train would make me look like a fly lately rescued from the cream-jug. No! my poor little person must never aspire to such ambitious heights. These perplexities, added to the great sorrow which gnawed at my heart morning, noon, and night, made me sufficiently miserable, as you may suppose; and I don't believe anyone ever welcomed living man with heartier pleasure than I did Cousin Frank, when he made his appearance about four o'clock on the afternoon of the third day after our last conversation. 'Any answers?' was my eager inquiry as I shook hands with him; but elderly gentlemen are apt to be leisurely in their movements, and his grey head had to be ruffled up, and his hat and himself conveniently disposed of before he could reply to my question.

'Any answers, did you say, Ellen?' came at length, however. (He never called me Nellie.) 'Yes! I have received three. Two ladies offer no salary—which is a drawback; but the third appears to me to be a most promising opening in every respect. I brought the letter for you to see. There it is; read it, and give me your opinion.' And he handed it to me.

A square enveloped, monogramed letter, on rough paper—quite a lady's letter. The handwriting a trifle spiky, but legible, and the English good. When I had finished its perusal, I was aware that Mrs. Clarke, of Cropton House, Cropton, near Stillborough, was in need of a musical governess for her daughter, *àtât* fourteen; and believed that the young person referred to in the advertisement enclosed would be quite competent to undertake the situation. The salary she proposed offering was thirty pounds a year, and the use of their family laundry. Should this arrangement appear satisfactory, references could be forwarded by an early post; and on their being approved of by Captain Clarke, the date of the young woman's arrival could be fixed without delay, as Mrs. Clarke was anxious to lose no time.

'A very sensible, practical letter, eh, my dear?' remarked Cousin Frank, as I refolded it and laid it on the table.

'Very,' and I paused, wondering if any girl ever did really want to be a governess.

'Should you like to answer it?'

'Oh, yes! May I refer Mrs. Clarke to you?'

'Certainly, certainly! Ahem—er—ahem ——.'

I waited for him to say his say out; so he continued diffidently;

'That is, I think it would be wise not to be too explicit about your family connections—you see, my dear—hem ——.'

'You mean that I had better say nothing about my father being alive,' I said, bluntly enough. The world was treating me badly, I thought.

'That is my opinion,' answered Cousin Frank, keeping his eyes out of the window; and in my own heart I knew he was right. These Cropton House people were most probably of the heavy respectable order of humanity; and would of course regard a convict's daughter as utterly unfit to be entrusted with even so much as the fingertips of a Miss Clarke.

So it was agreed between us that I should become demure reticence itself; and endeavour henceforth to act the cypher as adequately as in me lay.

'I suppose I may say that my mother's death has occasioned my seeking a situation?' I inquired presently, swallowing a something in my throat.

'By all manner of means. Indeed, I daresay Mrs. Clarke will treat you with greater consideration on account of your recent bereavement my dear! and gradually I hope you'll settle down quite nicely in your new sphere.'

Of the two, I'm sure I'd rather have died quite nicely there and then. With a big sigh, however, I promised to write my initiatory letter to the lady of Cropton House at once; and on Cousin Frank's departure did indite that somewhat priggish epistle, did also stamp and post it before six o'clock that evening.

Well! Mrs. Clarke speedily professed herself willing to engage me for a quarter at least: and by the end of the week it was settled that I should take my abode in my 'new sphere' as quickly as possible, namely, on the following Friday. Very, very fast, fled those last few days of liberty, made precious by sad farewell visits to my mother's grave. Leaving her behind was bitter work; but the hour came when I did so leave her, and, terribly alone in the world, rattled off in a crazy four-wheeler to Paddington, to Stillborough, to Cropton, to bondage.

CHAPTER III.

STILLBOROUGH is, as everyone knows, only about fifty miles from London ; so my journey was by no means formidable, especially as no change occurred to worry me out of my senses : nevertheless, the thought of the ' afterwards ' kept me on the alert, and I felt quite sick with nervousness when the train at last gurgled itself to a standstill by the Stillborough platform.

' Cab or ' bus ' m ? ' ejaculated a porter, with his hand on the door.

' Neither, thank you. Is Captain Clarke's carriage here ? ' I asked as calmly as I could ; public displays of nerves being derogatory, in my opinion.

' Yes, miss ; shall I take your rugs to it ? '

I gave him the tightly-strapped bundle, and was preparing to follow him with the rest of my light baggage, when a great-coated gentleman, about middle height, with a reddish, ugly-featured, dark face, framed in a pair of black whiskers à la mutton chop, and scrubby short black hair, hurried up, and, raising his hat, exclaimed in a loud voice : ' Miss Yescombe, I presume ? '

I bowed, and smiled feebly ; guessing at once that my interlocutor was Captain Clarke himself.

' Lucky hit of mine ; wasn't it ? So awkward speaking to the wrong person ? ' he said, with a laugh, which showed a set of strong white teeth. ' Don't trouble about your trunks ; I'll see to them. Ah, there's William. Would you mind following my servant to the carriage ? ' Of course I replied by humbly scuttering after that tighted, top-booted, cockaded personage through the booking-office to the well-appointed waggonette and pair, which stood a little way up the road, a boy holding the horses' heads.

' Where will you sit, ' m ; by master, or inside ? '

' Inside, please,' said I, and forthwith was tucked up right cosily in a great fur rug.

By this time the afternoon was verging towards evening, and a white mist rising out of some waste land to the rear of the station told me I should see nothing of the country through which we might pass. At length Captain Clarke made his appearance with a porter and my sole trunk—not a stupendous one by any means.

' Won't you sit in front ? ' he asked, as he took the reins ; but I declined making a move ; so the box was shoved under the seat, the steps were put up, the door was banged, William assumed a rigid attitude at the end of the waggonette, and away we went over a bridge

into the town, which seemed to be a populous, flourishing place, given up to trade entirely. I remarked on the lack of picturesque buildings as we drove along.

'All the better for us,' laughed Captain Clarke over his shoulder. 'That's our bank.' And he pointed with his whip to a plain, square, iron-barred, great-windowed house on our left.

'Indeed!' I said.

'Yes; we Clarkes have been head partners in the Stillborough Old Bank for years now; and I'll venture to say there isn't a better paying concern in the country.'

'You have other partners?' I remarked; why I'm sure I don't know.

'Yes; the firm is Clarke, Gordon, and Bertram, but Bertram isn't much better than a sleeping partner, to tell the truth. He's a lazy fellow, and we really haven't got enough business to keep three partners actively employed. That's the Abbey Church; and Captain Clarke turned a sharp corner after a very coachmanlike fashion.

'Bertram!' I repeated. 'Not Mr. Henry Bertram?'

This in fear and trembling, albeit reason whispered 'How unlikely!'

'Yes; Mr. Henry Bertram,' replied Captain Clarke. 'Why? Do you know him?'

'N-n-o-o,' I answered, feeling my face flush despite the cutting frosty air; 'but I—I've heard of him.'

I should rather think I had.

'Oh, indeed. Well, he's a capital fellow, and was of great use to us about five years ago, when we were rather hard hit by the failure of several large city houses. That is how he came to be our partner. Then he bought a very fine place called Bablock Park near us, and we got to be great friends. Steady, boy, steady!' and Captain Clarke tightened his hold on the off horse's mouth.

'I suppose you knew Mr. Bertram long before he became connected with your bank?' I observed presently, my soul benumbed by chill despair. Surely my father's sin had found me out.

'No; strange to say, I did not, although Lady Headington, his sister, is quite a friend of my wife's; but you see his house is only about a mile off ours, and in the country one's too glad of an agreeable neighbour to stand on ceremony, especially when he's a rich bachelor. Are you very cold?'

'My secret is safe,' thought I, and a great weight rolled off my heart; so I replied that I was quite enjoying my drive, and we talked together most affably all the way to Cropton.

'You'll like Tiddy, my little girl, you know,' he said, as we came near the lights of the village. 'Everyone likes Tiddy, and I hope

you'll make yourself at home and happy with us. You see, my wife's quite a young woman; so you'll find her a very pleasant companion when you're not in the schoolroom. She has been looking forward to your arrival, and all the delightful music we shall have, for ever so long.'

Now this wasn't a bit like the typical domestic tyrant; and I began to think that, if only madame resembled her lord and master, I shouldn't find my new sphere half bad after all.

'But strange women are never so nice as strange men,' sighed I to myself, and we trotted on briskly through the long straggling hamlet, with its tiny ivy-grown church and thatched, lop-sided cottages.

'Here we are!' exclaimed Captain Clarke at length, bringing his animals to a standstill before a five-barred blue gate, which William unlatched and swung back; and again my silly heart got into my throat, and again I quivered all over with fright! Wasn't I a great goose? but at seventeen one's mental epidermis is tender.

Cropton House was, on the whole, about as picturesque as the Old Bank. No gables, no dear little irregular bits of quaint masonry sticking out here and there, no courtyard; only a modern carriage sweep and lawn, bordered by well-grown trees, and a flat, Inigo Jones-looking mansion, illuminated by flashes of red firelight in several of its upper and lower windows, the latter of which I found belonged to the hall and library—the actual front of the house looking the other way, over an ample flower-garden and croquet-ground. Before we reached the hall-door it was thrown open by a tall man dressed in black.

'Is your mistress at home, Wakefield?' asked Captain Clarke, getting down from his seat, and coming round to help me out.

'Yes, sir! Mrs. Clarke and Miss 'Arriet are in the drawin'-room,' responded this solemn being, whilst I set my numbed feet upon the Cropton threshold for the first time.

'Let me take you to them at once, then, Miss Yescombe. Don't trouble about your things, Graham will see to all that. Graham!'—this to a comely, middle-aged woman-servant, who came forward from the end of the hall as her master spoke—'see that Miss Yescombe's trunk is unfastened, and everything is ready in her room—fire, hot water, and tea. You'd like some tea, of course?'

'Yes, sir!' and my rugs were taken away, also my trunk. How very small I did feel as I went up that wide oaken staircase, the manner of my life for the last ten years having been such as to render all this order and decorum and refined comfort nothing short of awful.

'I've brought you Miss Yescombe, Flora,' said Captain Clarke, suddenly opening the first white-and-gold-panelled door we came to in the broad corridor; and in a second I found my hands being warmly

shaken by a very, very fair, pretty woman, apparently about thirty, with a lovely brown-eyed, brown-haired child by her side, whose sweet, piquante face told me at once that her father said rightly when he declared that everyone liked Tiddy.

'You must have had such a cold drive,' smiled Mrs. Clarke, leading me to the fire. 'Do sit down and get thawed before the second bell rings. We dine at half-past seven, but you mustn't dress; you are too tired, I'm sure!'

'What have we got for dinner, Tid? This girl's a horrible little glutton, Miss Yescombe; and a spoiled puss. Ain't you, young woman?' and Captain Clarke sat down on the sofa, and pulled the 'spoiled puss' on to his knee.

'That's your own fault, papa,' laughed she, merrily; her bright glossy curls, gathered back into a long stream by a broad blue ribbon, catching a glorious ruddy tint from the firelight. 'I hope you don't mean to be very hard on me, Miss Yescombe. I shall never play well, so it's no use trying to make me!'

'Miss Yescombe couldn't be severe if she tried,' interposed Captain Clarke; 'she's too young.'

'I'm so glad you're quite a girl,' said Mrs. Clarke, turning her blue eyes upon my face, reflectively. 'I like young people, and I hope you'll like us.'

'I'm sure I shall,' was my ready answer; and I meant what I said.

'You know we're very quiet people, especially now; for our best neighbour, Mr. Bertram, is away, but——' and she hesitated, pity graciously softening her delicate face to such a mute sympathy, that I felt my whole soul to go out towards her, as she sat beside me in her costly grey and blue apparel. —

Before I could frame any coherent reply, Captain Clarke observed that he must go and make himself respectable for dinner; whereupon Tiddy volunteered to take me to my room, and I followed her forthwith to that very cosy and prettily furnished apartment.

Just as she left me, having satisfied herself that my creature comforts had been properly attended to, Graham brought me a cup of tea, and offered to superintend my toilette; but I dispensed with her services, and presently found my way back to the drawing-room, fresh-collared and cuffed, and otherwise purified from the effects of my journey.

Dinner at the Clarkes' was pretty much like dinner under its civilised aspect everywhere else, and as I was hungry enough to enjoy myself despite my shyness, I pronounced it a very highly satisfactory performance. Indeed, by the time the dessert came, I could scarcely believe that I, Nellie Yescombe, was a musical governess at all.

A short evening followed, during which I was neither asked to play nor sing, to my great relief; but instructed in the mysteries of divers photograph books by Tiddy, generally petted by Madame, and taught German backgammon by Captain Clarke.

Then came prayers, negus, biscuits, and good-night!

'Let me come to your room, just for a minute or two, dear!' begged Tiddy, as she gave me my candlestick, and, tired though I was, I said, 'Yes,' so winning was this pet child with her mignonne ways.

'Mamma's fallen in love with you,' said she, when the door was closed, and we were standing on the hearthrug before the bright, crackling fire, 'and papa says you're a very nice little girl; and I say that I'm going to be your great, great friend, and love you ever so much, may I?'

You may guess what answer I made. It was so delicious to find my bugbears turn into kindly souls, in whose society I might hope to spend at least a few calm happy months.

'I suppose you don't know Denzil?' observed Tiddy, suddenly, after we had been talking hard and fast, as girls will, for about half an hour. 'He's papa's first cousin, and partner in the bank!' stroking my hair, which I had let down over my dressing-gown, having already commenced my *toilette de nuit*.

'No, of course I don't,' I answered. 'Why, I didn't know there was such a place as Cropton in the world, until a fortnight ago.'

'Didn't you, really? How strange! Every one knows papa; he has lots of London friends, rich, fat men—the richer the fatter, it seems to me. Well, you know, Denzil lives with us when he's not somewhere else. He's very well off, of course; but papa and he were at Rugby together, and so they're great chums, and as there's lots of room in the house and the stables, Denzil likes being here better than at Stillborough, and I'm so glad he does, for I love him awfully, and he's so jolly. Oh, you can't think how jolly he is, Miss Yescombe, and so good-looking!'

'Indeed!' I replied, sleepily, 'and where is he now?'

'Up in Scotland. He went there for the grouse-shooting, and he's never come back, isn't it a shame of him?'

'Certainly!' and Tiddy, finding me disposed to slumber unawares, administered two vigorous hugs without delay, and left me to try how I liked the dainty bechintzed bed, so persuasively inviting my languid little body to profound and tranquil rest.

CHAPTER IV.

My life, for about six weeks after I had fairly settled down in my new quarters, and become accustomed to the routine of my daily avocations, was as calmly pleasant as any mortal's could possibly be. First, it was such a comfort to reflect that my presence in the flesh didn't cost Cousin Frank a farthing; secondly, was I not a lucky girl to have done my duty, and found that heroic performance about the wisest and most profitable action I could have pursued.

'Vile young Benthamite!' you exclaim, stern moralist, and I bow my head meekly to the accusation; nevertheless, the fact remains the same. I had done remarkably well for myself in undertaking the education of my darling Tiddy's rosy fingers, albeit, I suppose a more provoking pupil never existed.

Perhaps a more sociable person than myself might have found Cropton somewhat deficient in society, for the vicar was a very old man and a bachelor; his curate was a very young man, and a thorough ecclesiastic; the farmers were, of course, as good as nobody; and Bablock Park, Mr. Bertram's place, would not be accessible until Christmas, its master not being expected to return from abroad until then.

As far as I was concerned I was not at all sorry to be spared the infliction of meeting strangers; but Mrs. Clarke was always lamenting about the dulness of her home, and even Captain Clarke joined in the outcry, although what with the Bank, and magistrates' meetings, and the volunteer regiment in which he held his Captaincy and flourished about as a very big man indeed, and an occasional day with the Duke's hounds, he had really no reason to complain of stagnation. Neither had we women, for the matter of that, for, Sundays excepted, our days were always brimming over with occupation. Breakfast disposed of—and the Cropton breakfasts were by no means to be lightly esteemed, the Captain being a voracious feeder, and this invisible Mr. Gordon, of whom I heard more than enough before I had been a week in the house, sharing his predilection for a hearty morning meal—Tiddy and I began our practising, followed by harmony, whilst Madame arranged domestic details with the cook. About twelve, we, weather permitting, went for a walk or drive until luncheon at two; then more practising, relieved by afternoon tea, and a gradual cessation of vitality, until the clang of the first dressing-bell recalled us to a sense of our responsibilities. In the evening I generally played duets or chess with Mrs. Clarke, a

monotonous, quiet, orderly existence, and enjoyable withal. Do you accuse me in your own mind of having grown callous among the Egyptian flesh-pots? Of having turned my back on my mother's grave, and forgotten my father in his prison? Believe me, I was guilty of no such baseness; but my sorrows, from being always forced down into the depths of my heart, discoverable to myself alone, grew apart from rather than with my life; wherefore in writing of the events which befell me at this time, they must necessarily appear, as it were, dwarfed and hidden.

Flora Clarke, my mistress, was not a clever woman by any means; nevertheless, considerable shrewd sagacity dwelt beneath her flaxen hair. Without scheming, and in a gradual imperceptible way, particularly her own, she would contrive that things should happen precisely as she wished, smiling like an angel all the while. Even her husband, and he was no lamb, allowed her to follow the dictates of her own fancy on all occasions without a murmur of opposition, believing, I imagine, poor deluded man, that he was having his own way. Yes! Mrs. Clarke was thoroughly the head of her own household, and yet the serenity of her domestic horizon remained unclouded by so much as the whisper of a squabble.

To me she was always the kindest of the kind. Did I look pale, she would order out her pony phaeton and take me for an exhilarating drive. Did Tiddy weary me more than was her wont one day, the next must be rendered almost a holiday, by an excursion to Stillborough or a merry skating party. When I tumbled down and sprained my ankle on the ice, during my first essay as a *pâtineuse*—the fishpond in a field near the house forming the scene of my exploits—no sister could have nursed poor crippled me with tenderer care. Still, now and then it would creep out that she was well aware of the exact merits and demerits of my position, and I shrank away, chilled into something less than intimacy, despite our apparent cordiality. If ever I set myself seriously to consider Mrs. Clarke's brief coldnesses, I invariably came to the conclusion that her actual nature was as blonde as her skin, and that it was after all rather lucky for me, that she did not allow me to get too close a glimpse of the real complexion of her mind. I was fair, but not with her fairness, and between us two women—as women—lay a gulf far deeper than that created by circumstance. 'Is she jealous of Tiddy's boisterous affection for me?' I would inquire of my puzzled mind, when a somewhat larger icicle than usual dropped from those flexible red lips; but reason answered, 'No!' for the girl adored her mother, and exhibited her adoration freely. Neither could I discover other refrigerating agents, so I sheltered myself from the floating spicula

to the best of my ability, and grew fat and well-liking to a surprising extent.

Cousin Frank's letters were meanwhile constant and cheering. He spoke quite hopefully of the future, too; why, I could never understand, although it was certainly a comfort to think that one person at least in the world fancied you were good for something better than hammering away at Cramer's finger exercises all the days of your life.

Now and then I heard from my father, and a weary lacklustre tone in his letters told me that mother's death had greatly weakened him.

In vain did I try to cheer him up, poor dear! In vain did I, with tremulous hand, and anxious soul, depict our future home together. Always the same dreary 'The sooner I go to her the better for us both, Nellie!' or 'I'm only a disgrace and a burden; broken in health and broken of heart! The grave alone is my rightful shelter.' How I cried over those sad sad letters, as I sat alone of a night. Ah! my girl's heart was old with bitterness, before mother had slept in her cold bed three months.

Soon after my arrival at Cropton, I confided my apprehensions concerning the probable effect Mr. Bertram's return would work upon my prospects, to Cousin Frank. 'Do you think he will tell Captain Clarke all he knows? Can I in anyway prevent his doing so?' I wrote as the day of my possible persecutor's advent drew nigh. 'I do not think it at all probable that Mr. Bertram will trouble himself to meddle with your affairs!' came the answer; 'indeed, your acquaintance with him will most likely be of the very slightest description, as the visitors at a country house seldom or ever see much of the governess; but if the worst comes to the worst, and your father's position is discovered by Captain Clarke, he can but dismiss you, and we must find you another situation!'

Now, that letter irritated me more than I cared to own even to myself.

So then I was distinctly the social inferior of this grand Squire Bertram, of these Stillborough bankers. Yea! as a very dog before them. I a Yescombe.

Well, it was a bitter pill to swallow, but I did swallow it, and digest it, too, after much outcry and many grimaces; still the taste of it lingered in my mouth and made me loathe my world, made me hate to hear of all the grand Christmas doings which came off annually at Bablock, made me even savagely protest in my own mind against the general crowing and huzzaing excited by the expected reappearance of Denzil Gordon, admirable Crichton and lord paramount of that ilke early in January.

'I say, here's news!' shouted Captain Clarke, one December morning, at breakfast, after such stentorian fashion that I nearly choked myself by swallowing a piece of toast whole in my alarm. 'Denzil declares in this letter,' tapping one that lay open by his plate, 'that he will be here certainly by the 12th of next month, and means to stick to work like a leech until August. We won't have our dance till about the 16th. Eh! Flo?'

'I should think not, indeed. To have a dance without Denzil would be like eating plum-pudding without the plums!' exclaimed Tiddy; 'You're certain to fall in love with him, Nellie! Isn't she, mamma? Why Fraülein Rorchel used to make eyes at him all day long on Sundays, and sigh awfully if he only said "Good morning" to her!'

'Rubbish! Fraülein Rorchel was a ridiculous old idiot!' laughed Captain Clarke, whilst I sat silent, with my cheeks a flame, and sharp vitriolic words on the tip of my tongue.

'My dear Harriet! you quite forget that Miss Yescombe's feelings may be hurt by such silly gossip. Sensible girls don't fall in love with every man they meet, do they Miss Yescombe?' remarked Mrs. Clarke, eyeing me judgmatically under her golden eyelashes.

I could have shivered, the *spiculæ* were so dense; but I controlled the untoward inclination, and a fresh topic of conversation was started; namely, the proper composition of a Christmas Eve dinner party. Nevertheless this little incident did not lessen my antipathy to Mr. Denzil Gordon, and everything belonging to him visible at Cropton.

THE VASE OF THE TEARS OF EROS.

BY ROBERT BATSON.

EROS, the Boy-God, and the darling idol of mankind,
Thigh-deep in crushed red roses, deliciously reclined.
Tears from his Vase, awhile unsealed, rose, mistlike, hid the sun,
But not his smile—which fed his lovers singing, one by one.

POET.

Thine are all tides, beneath the moon,
Ambition's spring, and passion's swoon,
Hammer of Thor and hiss of steam,
Languor of heartsease, snowdrop's cream.
For thee the Bacchic panthers pine,
For thee the leaping heart of wine
Bubbles, till Pleasure's frenzied pain
Wrecks bursting bosom, burning brain.

CHORUS.

On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

MUSICIAN.

Thine are the chimes of eve that creep
Like babes half-cooing, half-asleep,
The lark that hymns the lightning flash,
Flown with the thunder's organ-crash.
The fields Elysian know thy horn,
Thou bugle rapture of the morn.
Last drop of honey sucked from rose
Is bitter by thy carol's close.

CHORUS.

On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

- PAINTER. Thine are the mountains laughing down
Rivers to kiss the merry town,
Fleets of the sky midst rainbows free
And ships that cut the dancing sea,
Grapes bleeding in the purple nook,
The wagtail's sparkle in the brook.
Canvas and marble burn to be
Transfigured to thy ecstasy.
- CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.
- FATHER. Thine is the iron toil of pride,
The sire's flash, whate'er betide,
From naked sun to mystic star,
Love's sacrifice, Love's strife, Love's scar.
A sea of lisping music rolls,
To bathe the havens of men's souls.
One touch, one sanction knits the creeds,
Which childhood teaches, manhood needs.
- CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.
- MOTHER. Thine is the fair fruit of the womb ;
Fruit sweetening the bitter tomb.
From thy bright wings shake magic dew ;
Make baby's sleeping heartstrings true ;
A knight baptised, hereafter strong,
To shield the right, and spear the wrong.
The rosy edges of thy smile,
The sharp sword's blood-stained edge beguile.
- CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.
- HERMIT. Thine is the cherubs' coloured glass
Which will not let them fly, while pass
The pilgrim's staff, the psalmist's rhyme,
The prophet's harp down crypts of time ;
Thine is the sleeping holy well,
The sculptor's everlasting spell,
Prayer of the saint, still poured alone,
Once heart of flesh, now hands of stone.

CHORUS.

On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

PILOT.

Thine is the morning star. Shine down.
Once look away, we fear to drown.
Love frowns a storm, or smiles a calm,
One glance a wound, the next a balm.
Weeds drift that once were mermaid's locks,
Beneath the blue waves scowl black rocks.
Nicean bark swept perfumed sea,
Odorous crests learn wrath from thee.

CHORUS.

On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

KING.

Thine are my loyal subjects. Thou
Beloved despot reign on now
O'er sceptred hand, o'er chartered clime,
O'er man, o'er nature, and o'er time.
Thou hast as many crowns, as men
Have hearts, kings come, go, come again,
Thy dynasty has but begun,
Yet dates from first blush of the sun.

CHORUS.

On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

REPUBLICAN.

Thine is wild chivalry, the slave
More truly free than royal knave.
We all are dust, but kingly dust,
If in our breasts, Love conquers lust.
We all are kings, but kings of clay,
Save as we wrestle, love, and pray.
Sov'reign of sov'reigns he whose eye,
Burns brightest with humanity.

CHORUS.

On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

PROPHET.

Thine is the hope of coming times.
The wrinkled age now crowns its crimes,
But smooth-faced Innocence shall be
Wedded to honour. Ah! I see
As in sweet Heaven angels grow
Younger for ever, so below,
Bald heads from beaming eyes shall draw
The pulse, the warmth, the joy of yore.

- CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.
- VOLUPTUARY. Thine is the waking of the leaf,
From out the graves of sloth and grief.
Smile and the crimson lusts decay,
Weeds scorched beneath so pure a ray.
Strike stormy skies within my breast,
And they shall break to stars of rest.
Touch barren seas within my soul,
From shells unseen bright pearls shall roll.
- CHORUS. On a Vase of tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.
- SOLDIER. Thine are dove's moan and lion's roar,
The wounds of love heal wounds of war.
When Sparta bled and tyrants fell,
Who cast the halo, breathed the spell?
Who made Thebes' Sacred Phalanx shine,
Were not three hundred lovers thine?
As one great heart, they strove, they sighed;
With faces towards the foe, they died.
- CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.
- SAILOR. Thine was brave Nelson's last sweet word—
'Kiss me Love's slave and battle's lord.
When icy senates were unjust,
When captains bade me bite the dust,
A vision of warm love to be,
My England's love smiled strength on me.
For erring loves true loves atone,
I die,—but England is my own.'
- CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.
- HUSBANDMAN. Thine are the bleating lambs of spring
That find the udder, ere take wing
Young linnets, and the dappled kine
Pant for the streams whose brawl is thine.
Thine are the sheaves, the sunny wall
Where idle peaches blush and fall,
Curl of blue smoke among the trees,
And feathered snows, and humming bees.

CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

PAUPER. Thine is the wealth that none can steal;
The pride of true hearts is to kneel;
Come rags or robes, come feast or crust,
The best are shining heaps of dust.
Who never loved was never born.
The blazing windows of the dawn
All look out on thy loveliness,
Which would enrich me, were it less.

CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

MILLIONAIRE. Thine is the crowning luxury.
All gates fly open to Love's key;
Else what to man were piles of gold,
And all the silks that ere were sold,
And all the treasures of the mine,
And all the diamonds that shine,
And all the hounds that ever ran,
And all the pomp, sport, grace of man !

CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

SUICIDE. Thine are rich playthings, dimpled boy,
Half rose, half lily, and all joy,—
Hands clasped in agony of prayer,
Teeth gnashed in infinite despair.
Ye four winds, fighting round his brow,
To waft him fragrance, hear me now,
Hear, young-eyed cherubim above,
Death frowns less cruelly than Love.

CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

LOVER. Thine is the music of men's fears,
The silver rain of falling tears.
Skulls sleep beneath thy garden plot,
To feed whose bloom proud martyrs rot.
Earthquake, disease, and wreck, Time's clock,
Fates, Furies vanish. Stands one rock
In ocean. In the desert vast
Smiles one oasis. Love will last.

CHORUS. On a Vase of Tears Love's white feet stood,
Vase sealed with sweet red seal of blood.

THE BLUE ROOM:

THE LAIRD'S STORY.

BY D. LANG.



THERE had been a quiet wine party in my room, and most of the men had gone. A few remained, smoking by the fire-light, rather silently and thoughtfully, for it was late in their University time, examinations were casting their shadows before, and they had, as men always do on a Sunday evening, discussed the main questions of metaphysics and religion. The subjects of ghosts came up, of course, it always does on Sunday evening; I think they strayed into it out of the Immortality of the Soul. We all knew some one who had seen a ghost, and some of us had even heard one ourselves in old houses in the country. One remembered an inexplicable knocking that always occurred at four o'clock in the morning, and how he had become used to it, and had awakened once, saying sleepily, 'Come in,' and then reflected that it was 'only that fool of a ghost.' Another had heard how a frightful head appeared reflected in the bright silver cover of a dish, thereby adding a new horror to the duty of carving. On the whole the best authenticated tales seemed to be those which represented some scene of terror constantly recurring in the rooms it had once defiled. 'Who knows?' Some metaphysician guessed. 'Time and space are only relative after all. A man looking down from Jupiter would see Pharaoh building the pyramids, for light must take some thousand years to get from Jupiter to us. Then there may be states of nerves, and ganglions, and so on, in which our ordinary limitations of space and time are weakened, or widened; and we become impressed by the most impressive facts that have occurred in the room where we find ourselves. That would account for the sound of shrieks and of tearing up of paper in the closet where the horrible woman in the story tortured the child to death for making blots in her exercises. You know that blotted copy-books were found in a locked cupboard in that

house many years after. Or, to take an instance in my own experience. The wife of a man in the Indian Civil Service was travelling with her husband in the hills. One night she had dreams and visions beyond ordinary nightmares. She did not learn till long afterwards that among their servants was a Hindoo who had to point out the place where certain murdered Europeans had been buried. In the morning he found that the party had camped in the dusk over the very spot of the murder. Then why is the house in Sloane-street haunted? Cagliostro lodged there, and another living medium, and the atmosphere somehow has become favourable to the laxness of nervous force, in which we see the past or perhaps the future.' 'I wish you would explain your explanation,' some sceptic replied. 'You talk about nerves like a vague Herbert Spencer, and you borrow your facts from Mr. Dale Owen. I've known two people who behaved sensibly in spectral matters. One was the Marquis of Garry Owen. When he heard that the ghostly drummer, who always plays before the death of the head of the Garry Owens, had been going about the house, what did he do? He insured his life heavily. That was twenty years ago; it was a capital thing for the assurance company. The other was young Adams of the Cleugh. His family had an old Venice glass, and the luck was to leave the house when it was broken. They kept it in an iron safe—somebody's patent. Adams was showing it to the present Mrs. Adams one day, there was no one else in the room, and she had the luck to break it. What did *he* do? He said nothing, collected the pieces, and got Salviati to make an imitation. The old people keep this specimen of Murano ware in the safe religiously, and no harm happened to any body.'

I was sorry he said this, for if you begin to talk about glass, you get into ceramics at large, Nankin, Worcester, Chelsea, and you work round to Mr. Whistler's paintings, the Japanese school of art, and so on. So it was a relief when Jardine woke up in the easiest arm-chair, and seemed interested. He was a large Borderer, who had been a fast and was now a very quiet, man. His character had completely changed after the last Easter vacation. All the Lent Term had been, a particularly hard and disagreeable one for men like him. The floods had covered the face of the earth, till people thought of recording the depth of the water, and of their boredom, on no less durable material than bricks, to be deciphered by some Mr. George Smith of the future.

Hunting was impossible; the eight could only have been properly coached out of a balloon. The result was whist after luncheon, and whist led to loo, and loo, I am sorry to say, yielded to the fascinating sport of baccarat. The result was that a good deal of paper, and a

general feeling of discomfort, was prevalent in college, and when the vacation came, Jardine went down, as it was supposed, a very heavy loser. In summer, he came up late, with a hamper of books, and a streak of grey in his brown hair. He gave up play, and took to reading, and seemed, like Grethir, in the old Saga, after the battle with the Vampire, to be unhappy when he was alone. This is a feeling so very common among undergraduates that no one noticed it particularly, and those who did observe a change in Jardine were the last to be likely to ask for an explanation. Now, I felt that one was coming, that the Laird, as he was called, had that influence on him, that makes a man speak and relieve his soul.

‘It’s all very well to chaff,’ he said, ‘but there are more things in earth than can be accounted for in your philosophy, you unbeliever. As for Jones, with his ganglions, and time, and space, he could account for anything; much good may it do him in the schools I speak of what I have seen. You remember when I went down last Easter; I was twenty-one, and not in a very happy state of mind for the festivities at my majority. But I explained the whole affair of my losses to the chief; it was soon over, and the rejoicings and the roasted ox, and the beacons, and a happy tenantry, and the rest of it went on, as the Mort D’Arthur says, “in the most orguilous manner it could be done.” When all the toasts had been drunk and the reels worked hrough, the Chief came to me with a very serious face. He said, I must do what the heir always has to do in our house on the night of his majority—sleep in the Red Lord’s room. Now, we are a superstitious clan in Galadale, and I had heard, of course, something vaguely about the Red Earl, but nothing to remember clearly. Every child about the place knew of the ghost of the Spanish girl in the tapestried passage, and how the last of the family wizards was burned with his wife on the Warlock’s Loan, and how he foretold the passing of the peerage from the family. That happened in the Forty-Five; but about the Red Earl there was only a “sough,” as we say.’

‘Now, the castle is an old Scotch château, with nothing remarkable about it but its grey weather-beaten look, and this, that there is a window facing the north, with no corresponding room. When we were children, and played at hide-and-seek, we found that out, and looked for the door often enough, for there we would have been safely hidden. It was to that door the Chief took me that night. Heaven forbid I should enter it again till the hour I take my firstborn there

‘I was left in a room with deep walls, hung with a faded blue tapestry, wrought with figures in a darker dull blue. The bed was as old and rickety-looking as Queen Mary’s in Holyrood, but the sheets

of course, were white and glistening, and there was a bright fire of wood burning. The furniture was older and simpler than that of the rest of the house. In the midst of the room was a small round table, whereon stood a wine-glass, covered with cobwebs; a plate, on which lay what must once have been food, and a dice-box with a cast of dice—the cast was deuces! The whole looked as if it had been untouched for generations, and the dust lay thick on two great chairs, one drawn up to the table, the other fallen on its side.

‘I stirred the fire and made it blaze, and pondered over the ember, till I nearly fell asleep. It was about three in the morning; in two hours it would be dawn. The whiskey, the claret, the speeches had their way, I yielded to sleep, and went to bed.

‘I do not know how long I may have lain, when I wakened with the sound of a horrible oath ringing in my ear.

‘A chair fell, there was a scuffle of dragging feet, the door was shut heavily, I heard the sound of a weighty body falling outside. After one moment of paralyzing fear, in which all my life seemed to retreat to the centre of its being, I sprang with a blind, involuntary impulse to the fire. One or two wild blows made the flames leap up. Was I alone in the room? No; in the chair drawn to the table one was sitting with his head fallen on his hands, and his face mercifully hidden. There was dust on the hat and trailing feather, white dust on the long brown curls, rust on all the steel of sword and breast-plate. I needed not to raise the face, I knew it was that of one centuries dead. . . .

‘There was silence, and I heard no voice. The hours went by, till the dawn. The light broke grey through the narrow panes, the figures stirred on the tapestry. I opened the casement, and the morning air came in, the scent of pines, the drowsy notes of birds. The ordeal was over, and when the grey light turned to red upon the wall, I crossed the threshold that I shall never cross again. . . .

‘The tale I heard that morning was brief enough. Earl Randal had been with Charles Stuart at the Hague, and, strangely, the King did not forget him when he came to his own. But the subject and the monarch’s friendship was broken by no light feud, and Lord Randal went down to make the name of the Red Earl hated on the Border. If a Westland Whig was tormented, if a girl disappeared, if a tower was burned, he got the credit of the exploit. But these amusements palled on his active mind, and he passed his nights playing high with the French lords who came to the Duke of York’s court at Holyrood. One morning the Duc de Jouy was found senseless in a passage of our château. This was not so strange as that red Lord Randal was found never more on earth. And the Frenchman swore that he had lost al

to him the night before, down to a stake I will not name, and then, invoking ruin on his soul, had passed from his sight, in a manner that found credit with the hearers.

‘Certainly there is nobody, no “handful even of white dust” in the leaden coffin in the vault, where Lord Randal should be sleeping with his fathers and his children.

‘That is my simple tale, and now let Jones explain it out of Herbert Spencer, or by a judicious mixture of John Stuart Mill and Kant. You will see that the point is rather the converse of most ghost stories. It was not the fled spirit of a body certainly mouldering somewhere that I saw, but the lost body of a lost soul.’

Mr. Jones’s system could not solve this case, and every one retired in fear and trembling to grope his way up his darkling staircase, where the decree of an economical Bursar had long ago caused the lights to be extinguished.

THE WICKED WORLD.*

At the very worst time of the later English stage, it was a relief for the lovers of true drama to turn to the Haymarket Theatre, where so long has reigned a manager never wont to declare that good comedy spells bankruptcy; and even though it may have occasionally spelled loss to him, Mr. Buckstone has never wavered in his allegiance to that lofty ideal which he has set before him throughout his managerial career.

Undoubtedly the most remarkable event during Mr. Buckstone's management at the Haymarket was the opening of a new era in dramatic literature, by the production of Mr. W. S. Gilbert's fanciful comedy, 'The Palace of Truth.' It was no *safe* experiment for Mr. Buckstone to introduce the sadly conservative British public to so novel a form of comedy as this. It might be all very well for Shakespeare, the divine, to bring creatures of pure fancy upon the stage but how rash—nay, how profane—of any modern playwright to attempt any such thing! Old-fashioned adherents of comedy declared that the experiment could only result in extravaganzas of the dullest and most foolish sort; and, so powerful is prejudice, that even when the success of 'The Palace of Truth' was assured, these old bigots held by their old belief, and wouldn't on any account go to see the comedy, lest it should alter their opinions! However, Mr. Gilbert's reputation is safe without their approving nod. 'Pygmalion and Galatea' was a greater success than its predecessor, and now 'The Wicked World' seems likely to keep popular favour as long as 'Pygmalion.'

The prologue to 'The Wicked World' is spoken by Mr. Buckstone who, as a green fairy, steps from the clouds to say that the author of the comedy has undertaken to prove that love is a curse instead of a

*"The Wicked World." A fairy Comedy, by W. S. Gilbert. Now being played at the Royal Haymarket Theatre.

blessing. Then the clouds open more widely and discover a lovely tropic landscape poised in their midst. The scene of the comedy lies during the whole of its action in fairy land. In that cloud-region dwell the fairies in utter sinlessness, and yet their sinlessness makes them wonder what the sinful inhabitants of

That wonderful and very wicked world
That rolls in silent cycles at their feet,

may be like.

Selene, the fairy queen, tells Zayda, the most curious of the sisterhood, that

. . . on that world—that very wicked world—
Thou—I—and all who dwell in fairy land,
May find a parallel identity :
A perfect counterpart in outward form ;
So perfect that, if it were possible
To place us by these earthly counterparts,
No man on earth, no fairy in the clouds
Could tell which was the fairy—which the man !

The only difference is that men do sin. But, says Darine, what are sins ? And Selene, better informed than her sisters, enlightens them.

Lutin, a serving-fairy, now enters, sent by the fairy king to require the services of the fairy knights Ethais and Phyllon, for some work upon mid-earth. So the knights depart, and the lady fairies left behind crowd eagerly round Lutin to learn what *he* has discovered upon his visit to the very wicked world. In mysterious accents he says :

I understand that what I understood
No fairy being ought to understand ;
I see that almost everything I saw
Is utterly improper to be seen.

He then goes on to express his wonder that in spite of all their misery and all the opportunities they have for leaving life

Men live—and live—and seem to like to live !

Selene explains that this is owing to the wond'rous gift of love :

It nerves the wearied mortal with hot life,
And bathes his soul in hazy happiness.
The richest man is poor who hath it not,
And he who hath it laughs at poverty.

This glowing panegyric upon what Selene is yet constrained to describe as of earthly things the earthiest, naturally wakes in fairy bosoms, not entirely free from curiosity, a desire really to know this wonderful passion. So, by a very happy thought, Zayda remembers

an old law of the fairy kingdom, which says that the mortal counterpart of every fairy absent from his home, may, at will, be summoned by those he leaves behind; and, after some debate, Selene allows herself to be persuaded to use the spell which shall bring the mortal counterparts of Ethais and Phyllon to the clouds; not to gratify fairy curiosity, but that

A mortal may behold our blameless state,
And learn the beauties of a sinless life.

She exhorts her sisters:—

Show no repugnance to these wretched men;
Remember that, all odious though they be,
They are our guests; in common courtesy
Subdue your natural antipathies.

The mortal counterparts of Ethais and Phyllon prove to be barbaric knights, who are in the heat of a rough fight with words and weapons when they find themselves suddenly raised to fairyland, the one accusing the other of sorcery. The novel and sensational sight of a sword combat delights the fairies, who know nothing of its seriousness and take no heed of the dangerous wound received by Ethais—too much of a warrior to complain of it. Besides, the bright eyes about him divert his notice from it, and the very evident attentions of Selene are not easily to be resisted. She tells him all the peculiarities of fairyland, and of the object for which his comrade and he had been summoned thither; and she monopolises him so completely that the other fairies, especially Darine, are hardly contented with her. By-and-by, when the fairy Lutin enters, Ethais mistakes him for his own henchman—of whom he is, indeed, the fairy counterpart. So mortal master and fairy man fence for a time at cross-purposes—this being one of the few places where Mr. Gilbert has followed the idea carried out in 'Amphitryon' and the 'Comedy of Errors.' The fairy at last incensed by the taunts of the miserable mortal, favours his fair countrywomen with some homely truths about Love which doubtless leads the intriguing Zayda to propose that he shall at once be sent to earth; but, ere he goes, he inveighs so bitterly against Sir Ethais that Selene is driven to express her love for the knight in the most passionate form:—

My soul is thine—whate'er thy faith may be
I'll be its herald; if thou hast no faith,
I'll be the high priest of thine unbelief.
Thy wisdom's mine—thy folly's mine.

ETH. Hush! Hush!

Why, this is madness!

SEL. Yes, for this is love!

Thus quickly has the mortal poison of human love worked in fairyland. Even this is not the worst, however. Selene loves Ethais, but Darine loves him too, and is filled with the most furious spite and jealousy against the queen. She inspires the other fairies with discontent also, and when Selene, who had secluded herself with Ethais that she might tend his wounds more carefully, gives an innocent description of her painful vigil with the wounded knight, those once simple and unsuspecting fairies receive her tale with the greatest incredulity and scorn. Selene is pained to find herself the object of so much dislike, but finds comfort in the love of Ethais, though even that she fears to have stolen from her by those envious sisters; so she makes the knight vow the utmost fidelity to her, which he does with very little ceremony, painting in dark colours the portrait of a deserted lover, such as he has been a dozen times. 'Oh,' says he, 'there are words for other agonies, but none for this.' Trusting Selene puts her whole faith in him, and is happy; though Darine is all the while plotting to ruin the queen's blissfulness. Finding from Phyllon that earthly Lutin is the most likely one to heal the wound of Ethais, she persuades Selene, by a hypocritical pretence of affection, to call the henchman to fairyland. Happily snatched up from earth whilst his shrewish wife was beating him, the knave is somewhat amazed at his translation to so fair a paradise, so charmingly peopled. He cries:—

Can this be death, and has she killed me? Well,
 If I *am* dead, and if this *is* the place
 In which I'm doomed to expiate my sins,
 Taking my sins all round, I'm bound to say
 It might have been considerably worse!

His reception by the fairies is very pleasantly humorous, but even in this case love brings discord; for Zayda, wishing to have him all to herself, warns Lutin against everyone of her sisters. Afterwards the knave makes some very frank confessions as to the state of his domestic affairs, which are stopped by the appearance of Darine—his wife's fairy counterpart, and so like the mortal shrew that Lutin believes it to be she, and quakes as to the consequences of her discovery of his familiarity with so many maidens fair. This soon gives place, however, to amazement at Darine's bold confession of her love for Ethais, and her request that Lutin shall give her the remedy for his master's wound. Instead he resolves to give her an essence that will throw the knight into a deep sleep like that of death. She immediately accepts the essence, and knowing the eager wish of Ethais for health, she offers him the remedy if he will transfer his love from Selene to her. Readily the knight makes the bargain with her, and just as he has taken the phial from her, the fairy queen

enters. Humbled by the unfairy-like weakness she has shown in yielding to love, Selene meekly resigns her queenship to Darine, and crowns her rival with her own hands. Then turning, with overflowing love, to Ethais, she cries :

I have a kingdom yet !

I have a kingdom here—in Ethais' heart.

A kingdom ? Nay, a world—my world !

A world where all is pure, and good, and brave ;

A world of noble thought and noble deed ;

A world of brave and gentle chivalry ;

A very goodly and right gallant world ;—

This is my kingdom—for I am its queen !

It is very difficult to persuade her that Ethais has been faithless ; but when it is, alas ! too clearly proven, she turns upon him with that fury of Hate which Lutin had so truly foretold as the fruit of Love. And so Darine's scheme is accomplished ; but what is her despair at finding that Lutin's potion, instead of curing Ethais, throws the knight into a trance, which, perforce, she takes for death ? However, she learns that the knave can still cure her loves, and by her wiles he wins the true remedy from him. But no sooner is Ethais wakened from his trance, than he plunges into a violent quarrel with Phyllon, begotten by the lying speeches of Darine, whose falsity is discovered, and all her plans again brought to nought. Selene enters, and once more upbraids her betrayer, repeating in bitter scorn those words of his—

Oh, there are words for other agonies, but none for this.

and threatening that she will follow him to earth, and pursue him with her hate for ever. But, lo ! the time has come for the return of the absent fairies, so their mortal counterparts must fly. The parting is hard. Zayda exclaims, 'Life, without Lutin, what can that be worth ?' and readily the knave replies, 'I cannot tell you, for I never tried.' And what says hating Selene to her hateful lover then ?

No ! no ! Thou shalt not go, thou shalt not go !

My hope, my shattered hope ; but still my hope !

Rudely Ethais thrusts her from him, and as she falls senseless, he cries—

Away from me ! I go to that good world

Where women are not devils till they die !

Soon as mortal feet have quitted fairyland, the sin which came with them flies too, and the jealousy, the envy, and the hate of that brief interlude have departed. Waking, as from a dream, the fairies look back with affright at that mortal visit. Darine is humbler than in the time when sin she knew not ; Zayda no longer yearns to know

what humanity may be; the pure and noble Selene has now a chaster queenliness. But when the fairy brethren return, bearing with them the 'precious privilege' that all fairies may love as mortals love, the queen cries eagerly:—

Such love is for mankind, and not for us.

And so the comedy ends.

As far as thought is concerned 'The Wicked World' is complete, and Mr. Gilbert has worked out a most original and beautiful idea to its due results. But when we analyse the action we do not find it so dramatically effective as that of 'Pygmalion' was. The play is divided into three acts, of which the first comes to a close for no clear reason; whilst a striking situation might have been derived from the wound of Ethais and the love of Darine. This seems to have struck the author, judging from the tableau discovered when the curtain rises to an encore. The climax reached at the end of the second act, when the queen declares her hate for Ethais, is most thrilling, and brings the house down long before Selene has ended her vigorous invective. It seems a pity that Mr. Gilbert should allow the interest to flag as the third act goes on, until the last struggle between the queen and the mortal knight, which restores the excitement of the story; but, again, the sudden acceptance by Selene and her sisters of a return to their former state, though it is altogether right and beautiful in a poetic sense, is a dramatic mistake. Once or twice in the course of the play Selene has threatened to throw up her fairyhood, and some such sacrifice as this seems wanting to make the action of the play complete. Galatea's return to marble was a most touching and tragic incident. Selene's waking from what she would fain call a dream has nothing very tragic or touching in it, and neither pleases nor saddens the audience. Had Mr. Gilbert reserved the wakening of the fairies for a fourth act, the fall of the curtain on Selene's prostration at Ethais' feet would have rendered her acquiescence in loveless fairyhood more natural and even affecting than it now appears to be. That happy speech of hers which ends the comedy, is, indeed, greeted with loud applause; but we leave the theatre with none of that pleasing melancholy which was inspired in us by the perfectly dramatic form of 'Pygmalion and Galatea.'

The comedy is very admirably written; its verse is of a higher order than that of 'Pygmalion,' and its wit is at least equal to that of its predecessor. Its masterly verses prove that the author of 'The Wicked World' is master of all the arts of force and fancy that are needed in writing dramatic poetry. But his greatest achievement is his success in making a fairy story so real and life-like. Holding by the great truth

that all the persons of a comedy are creatures of the imagination, he has taken a bold flight into the very heart of fancy, bringing upon his stage beings that exist nowhere else. Yet Selene, Darine, Zayda, Ethais, Lutin, and Phyllon, are as real to us as any Lord Dundreary or Colleen Bawn, and their joys and sorrows appeal to our sympathies as those of the most conventional stage hero or heroine.

This leads us to speak of the terrestrial representatives of those fairies. Miss Robertson takes the part of the Fairy Queen, making it throughout a most beautiful and powerful impersonation. Those naive questions in the earlier part of her conversation with Ethais are put with the quaintest innocency; whilst her denunciation of the knight's treachery is given with such a terrible earnestness that its close is lost in the thunders of applause it calls forth. Miss Robertson has made the character so much her own by careful study that it will be hard for anyone to follow in her footsteps. Darine is played by Miss Amy Roselle, with much grace and no undue attempt to be supernatural—the common weakness of stage-fairies—and though the envious fairy is no pleasant character, Miss Roselle makes her interesting. The *débüt* of Miss Litton at the Haymarket in the part of Zayda is of great promise; but natural as her every action is, her impersonation needs just the least addition of refinement to render it entirely charming. The humours of Mr. Buckstone as Lutin need no chronicling here; the mere thought of our great comedian as a stout fairy with little wings, and dressed in glittering green, is enough to set us in a roar. Mr. Kendal's Ethais is very good; the character of the rough Gothic knight seems even better suited to him than that of the gentle, studious Pygmalion. Phyllon is well played by Mr. Arnott, and the subordinate fairies, though they have little to do, are all represented by good actresses.

Mr. Hermann's music (written especially for the comedy) has many passages of great beauty, and skilful orchestral effects. The fairy landscape is beautifully painted by Mr. O'Connor, and great taste has been shown in choosing the fairy robes, so that it is evident that Mr. Buckstone has done his best to make 'The Wicked World' a treat both for eye and ear. It is so far beyond the level of any contemporary dramatic production that we deem no apology necessary for devoting so much space to an account of it; it would be well, indeed, for England if we had more frequently the opportunity of criticising works of such a character.

GEORGE FRASER.

A BALLAD OF MARION.

HE lay upon the arras-bed,
 My brother young and fair to see :
 Dame Alice stood above his head ;
 The Priest beside him bent the knee—
 I would to God that I were dead !

Sathanas fought with Michael there
 Over the bed. They rent amain
 His shapely limbs—those hands so fair,
 That ne'er would hold a lance again,
 Nor toy with Marion's yellow hair.

Christ ! 'twas an awesome sight to see
 The form we loved, so fair and strong,
 Torn with the last death-agony ;
 Praise to our Lady ! 'twas not long—
 The fight was o'er and he was free.

Errant through all the realms of space,
 New quests, new ventures free to try !
 And, as I gazed upon his face,
 I prayed that I—I too—might die—
 Our pitiful Lady lend us grace !

I rose, and no unknighly tear
 Had dimmed the brightness of mine eye ;
 My face was pale, but not with fear,
 Of what should happen by-and-bye—
 Yet, as I stood beside the bier,

I felt a secret tarnish steal
Athwart the mirror of my soul,
That wont so clearly to reveal
The path that stretches to the goal:—
I could not grasp it—could but feel
That life's sole talisman was dim,
Perplexed with mist, I knew not whence;
Perchance portending that with him,
My soul must set its journey hence—
Beyond the sunset's farthest rim.
They bore his body to the grave—
Dame Alice wept, or seemed to weep—
Right through the middle of the nave
I saw the long procession sweep,
With cross and banner, spear and glaive.
But Marion stood with clasped hands;
Her yellow tresses veiled her face;
No tear betrayed the straining bands
That held her heart. Her haughty race
Hath pride of many-acred lands.
And she was proudest of them all,
Nor would be seen to weep; but when
They lifted up the purple pall
From that which held her first of men,
She hid her face against the wall,
And wrung the glory of her hair
Between her two pale hands, and dimmed
The reflex of the sunbeam, where
It crept adown the wall and rimmed —
The outline of her body fair.
No tear betrayed the aching heart,
No sigh escaped her cold, white lips;
No tremor stirred in any part—
As evening, when the sunlight dips
Beyond the sea, and upward dart
Long flakes of red, so still was she,
Her yellow hair waved gently, like
In summer-breeze the crisping sea,
Behind the long, dark harbour dyke;
Or tufted flow'rets on the lea,

That scarcely raise their heads to meet,
The amorous air that stoops to kiss
Their beauty—then with flying feet
Passes. A rippling such as this
Went over her long hair so sweet.

I scarce could hear the words they said,
Or note the music as it fell
On listless ears; my heart so bled
To think of him I loved so well
In life. I love him still when dead.

They gave his body, earth to earth,
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
Proclaimed his style, his pride of birth;
And hung his helmet up to rust—
Mute record of departed worth.

The long procession passed again
Adown the choir and through the aisle;
The music pealed from crypt to vane,
And then the sun came out to smile
Amid the teardrops of the rain.

They hailed me lord of all the land,
And cringing vassals bent the knee;
But rapid thoughts, like shifting sand,
Swept by the anger of the sea,
Choked my full heart, and shook my hand.

I passed, days after, to the hall,
Where all the people of the place,
To own me lord, held festival—
I marked above each heartless face,
Sweet Marion's, coldest of them all.

Anon there came another day,
I met Maid Marion once again,
Walking alone along the way
Her path of late so oft had lain,
To where my poor dead brother lay.

She stood among the yellow corn
Mixed with the many-coloured flowers,
Bright in the slanting light of morn,
Flashed from the cradle of the hours.
She seemed so lovely and forlorn,

Clad in fine cloak of miniver—

Her lips essayed not any sound—
I had no heart to speak to her,
Her eyes were dropt upon the ground,
Her pride her beauty's minister.

Pale mallows and red poppies there,
And bright blue corn-flowers at her feet,
Bent in the gentle morning air
Around her. Thus I met my sweet,
A sad, pale picture of despair.

The long white path that met the sky,
Was all between us, while we stood
A moment silent. By-and-bye
We passed into the leafy wood,
And stood alone, Marion and I.

And can'st thou meet me thus? she said;
For thee the sad, foul deed was done,
For thee my love in earth is laid,
For thee I tread the world alone—
For thee the fatal price was paid.

Thy mother's soul. Ah me! I cried,
Dame Alice, mother mine no more!
Would, brother, I for thee had died . . .
I loved thee so . . . But now before
High God I swear, whate'er betide,

That I from hence this day will fare
To distant lands beyond the sea,
O mother, wring thy faded hair,
For thou shalt know no more of me;
I'll seek a knight's death anywhere,

So that I lift the cloud away
That evermore will shroud my name.
In lands beyond the sun's last ray
I'll seek new knighthood free from shame—
Forget thee, mother, if I may.

O was not he thy husband's son?
What more was I, that thou should'st plan
A subtil poison-death for one—
So true a knight and gentleman,
Though he was his, but I thine own?

Perchance, by mercy saved from hell,
In Heaven's eternal rest with God,
We two may meet—together dwell
With him who sleeps beneath the sod :
God grant us grace. Farewell—farewell !

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SWIFTER THAN A WEAVER'S SHUTTLE.

BY JUDITH CONSIDINE.

CHAPTER I.

GREEN BEFORE THE SUN.

THIS way, sir! Plenty of room 'ere, sir! Smokin' carriage full,' and open flies the door of a first-class compartment in the 5.40 Birmingham express, as that punctual and admirable train groans and jerks itself to a standstill by the up Oxford platform one fine September evening.

There is only one person to be seen in this compartment, and she is so very small a person that perhaps you might not see her at all, were it not for her scarlet shawl, and broad-brimmed, steeple-crowned felt hat, with the bit of peacock's feather stuck in the brim, gleaming gold, and purple, and dark green in the steady sunshine. *Figaro* beguiles her solitude, but at the sound of the porter's voice she looks up with large grave eyes, no-coloured as sea-water, and out at the venient 'Sir!'

At what she can see of him rather, namely, a broad, flat, black-grey back, and a long black-grey arm working to and fro, apparently in connection with a waistcoat pocket.

Suddenly the arm darts viciously against the porter's corduroy shoulder as he steps out of the carriage, having hoisted a good-sized travelling bag into the netting, and satisfied himself as to the working condition of the window; and the porter being a fat, easy-going little man, laughs a fat little laugh, and then the back turns itself about, and there is a meeting of hands and a mumble of something like 'Thank you, sir!' and now the small person is looking down at the 'G.W.R.' decorating the carpet—somebody great, and neutral-tinted, and keen, with a tightly-strapped grey rug in one hand, and a paper-bound book in the other—such strong lean white hands—gets between

her and the porter and the running, vociferating, crazy creatures on the platform—between her and the work-a-day world, as it were.

Now, in these hyper-sensitive, overwrought days, the unprotected female traveller is apt to fancy that to stare hard at a man for more than half-a-dozen consecutive seconds is an error of judgment likely to lead to awkward mistakes, such as the development of latent insanity on the part of the stared at, or the exhibition of felonious instincts of varied enormity; wherefore, having perceived that the intruder on her privacy is considerably larger in volume than the majority of his fellow-creatures, our small person picks up her *Figaro*—it has slid off her black silk knee—not too new silk or too substantial, and immerses herself in the consideration of the 'If you dream of' sheet of likenesses with beautiful intentness.

But the veiling of one pair of grave, sea-water coloured eyes does in nowise preclude the use, and good use, too, of another pair of bright much-seeing brown ones; and the great grey man looks hard at the small person in the scarlet shawl and black felt wideawake as he takes off his hat and stows it away in the netting beside his bag.

This is what he sees. A little pale face, such a little face, with a little straight nose, and a little thin red mouth, and a curious grave look about it like a shadow, and soft babyish flakes of flaxen hair—short hair—cut straight like an ill-clipped boy's all round the pretty head, and tucked away behind two pink little ears, and on the top of this the great felt hat.

It is unlike anything in the way of womanhood, girlhood, the great grey man has ever before seen in his life, and he is thirty years old if he is a day. Yes! and thirty years of energy and moving about, and getting acquainted with lots of places and lots of people, or I am very much mistaken; the only thing he fancies he has ever seen at all like it is an old Gainsborough picture somewhere—South Kensington Museum, most likely—this settling down, he and his long grey legs, in the seat next to the window, not her window,—an odd Gainsborough picture of a weird outlandish child with a gun over its shoulder or a lamb by its side, anyhow with just such a hat on its head, and just such a face under the hat. H'm, and he looks at his watch.

Ten minutes to six!

She is not strange to the city of domes and spires, or she would be craning her neck out of the window, and gaping and hailing cads to tell her where Magdalen is, and the Barges, and the Bodleian, and the 'High,' and the Martyrs' Memorial, and Tom Quad, and all the rest of the dismal old topographical, and ethnological, and archæological rigmarole one has heard ever since one was born.

No, she is not a stranger, and *Figaro* must have picked up some to

be so particularly interesting. Ha! off at last, goodly city of domes and spires. Ta ta, dons and duns. Somehow the academic groves don't seem quite the same to critical, hard-headed manhood as to ardent, soft-brained youth. It is well to see what pleased, satisfied, inspired one once, if only to measure the great space of trodden years faring 'twixt thought and deed. But—and the great grey man smiles at his own thought, so that strong even white teeth gleam out between his unmoustached lips, and the small person sees the smile and the strong beautiful teeth, and the keen, dark, clever face and quails. To be boxed up in a space not exceeding ten feet by seven, with an escaped lunatic over six feet high for upwards of an hour and a half (this express runs straight to Paddington, without stopping) is truly a somewhat awful prospect.

What is he going to read? Bret Harte? Come, we may weep over our Smiff once more. No man can be very mad who has the sense to do that. So they journey on between the reddening hedges blackberry speckled, by the dull green meadows fringed with undulating shadows, studded here and there with grand calm trees uplifted massively against the tender sky, with dusky depths of leaves; and then suddenly the Parodies are tossed aside, and a sleek dark head goes out of the window, and comes in again, and a pleasant confident voice—the voice of one who knows good from bad, and likes it best—says, 'This is quite the best view of Oxford!'

The grave eyes listen; eyes can listen just as a big dog's left front paw can watch. 'You should see it!'

She gets up, not a very prolonged performance. When she is on her feet the peacock's eye is barely level with the top of the blue cloth padding, and gathering her red shawl round her, so that you can see how very small a person she really is, she comes to his window and puts out her head and looks back at the crowding towers veiled in golden light, and over her face steals a soft, shy happiness born of sudden pleasure. It is perfect, and perfection is the *sangréal* of her life.

'Well!' he says, 'don't you think I'm right.'

'Yes! quite'—still with her head out of the window—'I am so much obliged to you for pointing it out to me. Oxford always looks best from a distance.'

'Yes,' he answers, marvelling a little at the fashion of her hair, 'in more senses than one.'

She makes her way back to her seat; but his eyes follow her, and when she sits down he turns himself about, and composes himself in his corner, and crosses his long legs in a decidedly conversible manner, scarcely consistent with the terms of that canon of rigorous

British etiquette, which provides for the humiliation and confusion of the nameless.

'I have been a good deal abroad since I left Magdalen, and one loses old ways and likings as easily as old friends;' quite as if they had taken their tickets together, and started together, and were bound for a common destination; and yet there is nothing of the insolent ruffian about him. She is a wise little lady, she knows that.

'But not your conviction that Magdalen is the most beautiful place in the world, I hope,' she answers, considering him with her calm young eyes.

It is such a queer little face, so much in sober earnest with this poor wicked world—so innocent of worldliness. 'How old is she, seventeen or seven-and-twenty?'

'Is that your opinion?' he asks, with fine caution.

'Yes!' promptly. 'I think it has no equal, not as a matter of prejudice but judgment.'

She must be seven-and-twenty at the very least; these fair mites of women preserve wonderfully.

'It is my college.'

'Indeed!' And then she pulls herself up with a jerk, and looks out of the window at two colts, who are scampering away across a field hard by, startled by the rushing snorting train.

'And I quite share your admiration for it. Have you seen the alterations they have been making in the school and Long Walk?'

'No;'—and she looks back at him—'I have not been living in Oxford. Are they an improvement.'

'Very great. The next generation of boys will be much better off than we old ones were.'

'Were you a Magdalen schoolboy, then?' flushing faintly at her own boldness.

'Yes, I had that privilege.'

'But not a chorister,' quite eagerly.

'Yes; a chorister after a fashion,' laughing, and knitting his long fingers round one knee.

'I should think'—she begins, and then she stops, and looks down at the square toe of a little boot protruding from beneath the plaited black silk petticoat—'I should think it was very pleasant to be a chorister;' but this is not what she was going to say, and he perceives the clumsy subterfuge.

'It depends on whether you're particularly fond of music. I can't say I was when I was a boy. Have you been to the chapel lately?'

'I went once during Commemoration week. Lady Slade's little nephew is a chorister.'

'What Lady Slade is that?' hitching himself farther back into the seat by his elbows, and clasping his hands behind his head. Verily, the angularity and restlessness of this great man are astounding.'

'Not Lady Slade of Wrentham?'

'Yes; I'—and just a moment's hesitation—'I have been her companion for a year, that is how she came to take me to Magdalen Chapel with her.'

'I used to know young Slade. He was at New, and a wonderful sculler. What's become of him? Is he married?' smiling as men do, and will smile, at the notion of the once familiar roysterer hewing away at the domestic sirloin of beef, or rocking the domestic cradle.

'Yes; he's married, and got a living in Northamptonshire.'

'A fat living, I hope; poor parsons are a curse to themselves and their parishioners. Bless me! How odd! Well, when you go back'—straightening himself up, and looking as pleased as Punch——

'Oh! but I'm not going back,' with much energy. 'I've been ill, and have been ordered a holiday, and change of air, and all sorts of pleasant things. I'm not going back, that's very certain,' and she laughs out loud, a merry little laugh, like a bird's sudden brief song, and shakes her head with a cunning wisdom calculated to impress the casual observer with the belief that she must be a very sly, small person indeed. But the great grey man can scarcely be classed under this category. To observe, not casually but closely, keenly, has been his pleasure from his youth up, and he is so observing now.

'What has been the matter with you?' he asks.

'I have had bilious fever.'

'And they cut off all your hair, eh?' with serio-comic pity. She is seventeen now: the merest child. How wonderfully these fair mites of women can deceive one!

'Yes,' solemnly, trying hard to look old and grim.

'I'm a doctor, you see; so sickness interests me,' stretching out an arm, and clutching himself tightly by the back of the head. 'You don't look like a bilious subject, though!'

'Wrentham is not a very healthy place; the poor people are always getting ague and low fever,' turning away her little white face. It is not pleasant to be spitted on two sharp eyes, and held up to the light of science in native imperfection unadorned.

'Really! and you tried bilious fever for a change?' Still in that serio-comic tone; then more gravely, releasing his head, and slipping his arm through the rest by his side, 'Well, I hope you are bound for some healthier home. People elect to fancy that directly they're out of the doctor's hands they're safe; but convalescence to many proves

British etiquette, which provides for the humiliation and confusion of the nameless.

'I have been a good deal abroad since I left Magdalen, and one loses old ways and likings as easily as old friends;' quite as if they had taken their tickets together, and started together, and were bound for a common destination; and yet there is nothing of the insolent ruffian about him. She is a wise little lady, she knows that.

'But not your conviction that Magdalen is the most beautiful place in the world, I hope,' she answers, considering him with her calm young eyes.

It is such a queer little face, so much in sober earnest with this poor wicked world—so innocent of worldliness. 'How old is she, seventeen or seven-and-twenty?'

'Is that your opinion?' he asks, with fine caution.

'Yes!' promptly. 'I think it has no equal, not as a matter of prejudice but judgment.'

She must be seven-and-twenty at the very least; these fair mites of women preserve wonderfully.

'It is my college.'

'Indeed!' And then she pulls herself up with a jerk, and looks out of the window at two colts, who are scampering away across a field hard by, startled by the rushing snorting train.

'And I quite share your admiration for it. Have you seen the alterations they have been making in the school and Long Walk?'

'No;'—and she looks back at him—'I have not been living in Oxford. Are they an improvement.'

'Very great. The next generation of boys will be much better off than we old ones were.'

'Were you a Magdalen schoolboy, then?' flushing faintly at her own boldness.

'Yes, I had that privilege.'

'But not a chorister,' quite eagerly.

'Yes; a chorister after a fashion,' laughing, and knitting his long fingers round one knee.

'I should think'—she begins, and then she stops, and looks down at the square toe of a little boot protruding from beneath the plaited black silk petticoat—'I should think it was very pleasant to be a chorister;' but this is not what she was going to say, and he perceives the clumsy subterfuge.

'It depends on whether you're particularly fond of music. I can't say I was when I was a boy. Have you been to the chapel lately?'

'I went once during Commemoration week. Lady Slade's little nephew is a chorister.'

'What Lady Slade is that?' hitching himself farther back into the seat by his elbows, and clasping his hands behind his head. Verily, the angularity and restlessness of this great man are astounding.'

'Not Lady Slade of Wrentham?'

'Yes; I'—and just a moment's hesitation—'I have been her companion for a year, that is how she came to take me to Magdalen Chapel with her.'

'I used to know young Slade. He was at New, and a wonderful sculler. What's become of him? Is he married?' smiling as men do, and will smile, at the notion of the once familiar roysterer hewing away at the domestic sirloin of beef, or rocking the domestic cradle.

'Yes; he's married, and got a living in Northamptonshire.'

'A fat living, I hope; poor parsons are a curse to themselves and their parishioners. Bless me! How odd! Well, when you go back'—straightening himself up, and looking as pleased as Punch—'Oh! but I'm not going back,' with much energy. 'I've been ill, and have been ordered a holiday, and change of air, and all sorts of pleasant things. I'm not going back, that's very certain,' and she laughs out loud, a merry little laugh, like a bird's sudden brief song, and shakes her head with a cunning wisdom calculated to impress the casual observer with the belief that she must be a very sly, small person indeed. But the great grey man can scarcely be classed under this category. To observe, not casually but closely, keenly, has been his pleasure from his youth up, and he is so observing now.

'What has been the matter with you?' he asks.

'I have had bilious fever.'

'And they cut off all your hair, eh?' with serio-comic pity. She is seventeen now: the merest child. How wonderfully these fair mites of women can deceive one!

'Yes,' solemnly, trying hard to look old and grim.

'I'm a doctor, you see; so sickness interests me,' stretching out an arm, and clutching himself tightly by the back of the head. 'You don't look like a bilious subject, though!'

'Wrentham is not a very healthy place; the poor people are always getting ague and low fever,' turning away her little white face. It is not pleasant to be spitted on two sharp eyes, and held up to the light of science in native imperfection unadorned.

'Really! and you tried bilious fever for a change?' Still in that serio-comic tone; then more gravely, releasing his head, and slipping his arm through the rest by his side, 'Well, I hope you are bound for some healthier home. People elect to fancy that directly they're out of the doctor's hands they're safe; but convalescence to many proves

as fatal as the actual disorder they have been suffering from,' with a slow, sarcastic smile, showing that this man of angles is a man of opinions too.

'I am going to Surbiton—near Kingston, you know—on the Thames:' explanatorily, as if he was a recently dropped moon man.

'Yes; I know!' smiling at her compassionately, her efforts at superiority are so pitifully immature, as immature as the tragic airs of a stage-struck miss of seven. 'And who's to take care of you at Surbiton?'

A shrill ear-torturing scream of steam, a pause, a second fainter whistle, as 'twere the echo of the first, and then a sudden jerk back, jarring every bone in its socket.

In an instant the great grey man's face changes from bantering serenity to quickest expectation—not fear, there is no fear in those bright dark eyes, about that suddenly-compressed, firm mouth.

'Sit still!' he says, but gets up himself and looks out.

And she does sit still—quite still, gripping the arms of her seat tightly with her two little grey hands, and watching him with scared, wide-open eyes. What if she and this great man are bound to die together. What if death be even now close upon them, in front of them, round about them? Her breath comes fast in many pants, her lips parch and burn, and he does not speak. What is he seeing? Is it coming? The violent blood beats fierce upon her brain, each throb clear positive as a blow; in her ears rises and roars the noise of many voices: and he will not speak. She cannot sit there and be killed and make no sign. With a great start she jumps up, but the floor shakes and vibrates beneath her feet, so that she can scarcely stand; a crash of groaning iron, another dismembering jerk—a jerk that knocks her fairly off her legs back into her seat.

'Thank God! we are saved!' says the great grey man.

She does not hear him, or understand him, or see him, she is praying so hard to her Father in Heaven.

He watches her a second or two, rubbing his damp forehead dry with a great white silk handkerchief.

'Come,' he says at length, gently; 'you've no need to be frightened now. It's all over.'

His words mix themselves up with 'Them that trespass against us.' She looks up at him as if he were miles away.

'It's all over,' he repeats, laying his hand on her red shoulder, and giving her a little shake. 'The break's on, and we're getting out of the way as fast as we can.'

The quick blood stains her face to the colour of her shawl. She

has never died before, and she is not very strong—rather a slender, wind-flower of a creature indeed, and——

‘No,’ he says, sitting down on the opposite seat, and holding her eyes with his, as a stern elder will hold a naughty child’s. ‘No.’

The poor red lips quiver piteously, and the long gold eyelashes twinkle in the sun, now sinking crimson-robed to rest upon a primrose bed—her last and goodliest of suns.

‘But,’ she begins presently, looking about her in vague alarm at the rushing hedgerows, at the whizzing telegraph posts: ‘hedgerows, telegraph posts, they have passed before. What are we doing? What——’

‘We are going back to Oxford,’ he answers quietly. ‘We have been within an ace of complete smash. By some infernal mismanagement or other, a goods train met us plump—on the same line of rails, you know. When I looked out, there wasn’t fifty yards between the two engines.’

‘And you never said a word: you could see that and keep still!’ knitting her pale brown eyebrows, and regarding him with amazed incredulity.

‘Why not?’ smiling as calmly as if to be horribly mangled and mutilated were a normal concomitant of daily life. ‘All the yelling in the world could have made no difference. As it is, you see, we may both live to be a hundred,’ and he laughs and looks at his watch, and holds it to his ear. Those two jerks have stopped it. Perhaps, had the engine-driver been a fool or a coward, or the guard had been asleep, or the break had been too weak to bear the strain put on it, or the boiler had burst, this fact might have decided the precise moment at which the ‘heartrending catastrophe’ occurred. ‘Among the *debris* of a first-class carriage were found the bodies of a man and a woman—the former apparently about thirty years of age, tall and well dressed; the latter short, slight, and young, as far as it is possible to judge from the aspect of the corpse, which is very much disfigured, the face being completely battered in, and the legs——’ Ouf! these newspaper paragraphs have more in them than one gives them credit for.’ The small person contributes this slip to the unpublished journalistic literature of her native land, and shudders.

‘Do you think we shall go back to Oxford?’ asks she after a while, when silence has steadied her nerves somewhat, and matter-of-fact has partially resumed its sway over her intelligence.

‘No; I shouldn’t say so. I should think we should pull up at some intermediate station and wait there till the line was telegraphed clear, when we should start again for Paddington.’

‘Oh, I’m so glad of that.’ How she trusts him! Why should

she? Why should she not find out all this for herself, the goose! 'If I didn't get home to-night, Ned would be so put out.'

'Ned, Ned—what Ned? Ned a husband? Ned a brother? Ned—a Ned who dares to be "put out" too—to be sulky—rude—savage to her. That sounds like a husband.' The great grey man stares gloomily out at the darkling world—the world whence the sun has vanished oddly all of a sudden, in some inexplicable, eccentric, and complete manner—such as no well-regulated sun would think of attempting.

'I dare say you'll be late,' says he stolidly, somewhat as though he took a dull sort of pleasure in Ned's agonies of mind.

'I dare say I shall,' unbuttoning and slowly pulling off her left glove, finger by finger. It is delicious to trifle with time when one has recently known the sensation of being at one's last gasp; a kind of rare and choice pleasure, like spending the first five pounds of an unexpected fortune.

The left glove off, and in her lap, she begins upon the right. The great grey man looks round; looks straight at the third finger of her thin, white hand. She is very thin. My dog could eat her for his dinner and feel hungry. It is there. The plain, thick gold ring, and next to it a diamond keeper. The great grey man looks away again out at the world, quite a benighted world now, and off comes the right glove. There is no ring upon that hand.

So they travel back into a lonely country station, and there come to a standstill, whereupon a vast deal of talking and questioning and god-bless-me-ing ensues, and the great grey man puts on his hat and gets out and indulges himself in a pipe as he marches up and down the gravelled platform, and the small person takes off her big hat and pushes away the light, silky, flakes of yellow hair from off her forehead, which is burning hot, and aches with the old fever ache, and, her small, pink-cheeked face framed in her two white hands, thinks—thinks—and then there is a loud ringing of a bell and a scrambling on the roof of the dark carriage; so dark indeed that you can see nothing, not even the sparkle of that diamond, and suddenly a great light streams full upon her cropped head, and men come and stare curiously, and one great grey man shuts up his pipe in its case with a snap, and scowling at his fellow creatures, lounges up to the door in a lordly, masterful way, and presently gets in with a sardonic 'Well! I suppose we *are* off in earnest now?' and then the guard locks them up, and with a jubilant whistle the brave engine-driver turns on the steam, and away they glide into the silent night with a fragmentary and yellow moon always to their right, and faint

stars gleaming palely high above the soft white clouds in the smalt wastes of endless space.

But no word say they, nor she to him nor he to her; and by degrees sleep settles on her eyes, and her head leans heavier against the cushion, and her body softens to lithe curves of black and red, and down by her side drops one small white hand, whereon gleams a thick gold ring, and ——

‘Tickets, sir! Tickets—tickets!’

The small person feebly struggles up into a sitting position, and rummages in her pocket for a sealskin purse. Her ticket found and surrendered, and a great yawn eaten, she puts on her hat and stands up to get down her neat little bundle of shawls and blue waterproof and agate-handled umbrella, but the netting is quite out of her reach.

A big hand seizes them by the strap, and sets them upon end on the seat before her.

‘Thank you!’ she says civilly.

‘Can I be of any use to you?’ as they come into the full glare of the Paddington gas-lamps and the power of the Paddington porters. ‘Get you a cab—see after your luggage!’ turning round and looking down upon her graciously. They have jockeyed King Grim together, she is in a way integrated with his future life, in a way associated with him indissolubly for ever; and it is somewhat this man’s habit to behold grace in things and persons associated with himself—even in a Mrs. Ned.

But, no; she will give him no trouble. She is very well able to look after herself; she is a traveller of experience.

Well; these young women who abide in nooks and corners of the earth (one must necessarily be acquainted with nooks and corners to play *dame de compagnie* to Lady Slade with a wedding ring on one’s wedding finger); these young hangers-on to respectability by the skin of their teeth, do really possess an uncommon knack of swimming where more refined, better brought-up, persons must sink. The great grey man listens to her avowal of her own powers of management with complacent calm.

‘So,’ says she, when the last hasty word is uttered, and the boxes and baths, and bags and bundles are being tossed and kicked and hauled out of the luggage van, and it becomes evident that if she doesn’t want to lose her trunk, she must make haste to claim it. ‘Thank you very much, and goodbye!’ and she puts out a little grey hand to him as boldly as you please.

‘Goodbye!’ he says, and takes it in his, and crushes it up, and squeezes it, the little grey hand; and a strange eager longing look

comes over his keen resolute face, and his eyes dwell on hers hungrily an instant, nay, two instants, may be three; and then an official overbearing 'Now then, please,' sends them asunder, and the world is work-a-day again.

CHAPTER II.

OUT OF THE DISTANCE OF DREAMS.

A THUNDERY blackness overhead, that is not sky, nor smoke, nor air; the roaring of a battle in one's ears—that fiercest deadliest battle, the battle for daily bread; dimmed colours seen through acres of plate glass; want, and sin, and grief, thriving bravely in acres of dirt; men, and women, and children to the right of one; men, and women, and children to the left of one; busy traffic of wheels and shod hoofs in the midst, and among them all, shorter than the tallest, shorter by a head, for instance, than that great grey mortal marching on in front there so determinately, with his umbrella sticking up over his shoulder and his head thrown back, walks a bright-faced, clean-skinned, light-haired, hazel-eyed, muscular-looking, not altogether unhandsome young man: walks briskly, as though the world wagged well for him this Friday morning.

Along Whitehall, down the Strand, through Temple Bar, into Fleet Street, on they go—the grey shoulders and the close-clipped, fair head, steadfastly, the one behind the other—now a little nearer—now a little farther, but always distinct and separate from the loitering crowd. And by degrees a sense of something remarkable and fine about the shoulders establishes itself in the close-clipped head, and the hazel eyes look at them more than at the women's yellow plaits and powdered faces. So much so, indeed, that when they turn at last down a gloomy street of inhuman and uninviting aspect, a smile positively creeps over the brisk young man's good-tempered pink and white face, for that is the street down which he will turn too—is now turning, in fact—and——

A clink of metal on the pavement.

The brisk young man pulls up. The grey man marches on, swinging his umbrella round and round like a flail, as if he meant to march clean over the side of the world before long.

At the foot of a lamp-post lays a little silver shield, with a red cross painted on it. Two sharp hazel eyes pounce on it—a well-shaped,

sunburnt hand picks it up, and away go swift young legs in great buoyant bounds after those grey shoulders.

They catch them up—they bring them to a standstill—they make them right about face, and then a cheery, chirpy, musical voice, says, with a little laugh (a merry soul, I'll warrant, this brisk young man)—

‘I think you've dropped this?’

‘By Jove, so I have!’ Then plunging deep into a breast pocket, and bringing up a capacious pocket-book wherein to stow away the treasure trove. ‘You couldn't have done me a greater kindness. Wouldn't have lost this for worlds, it saved my life. Why!’ breaking off short, and staring hard at the amused laughter-smitten face before him, ‘your name isn't Stapylton?’

‘Yes it is!’ answers the chirpy voice, loud and emphatic, ‘and yours is Arnot Gwynne. How d'ye do, my dear old fellow? Fancy our meeting again in this jolly unexpected way.’

And they shake hands, and laugh, and look, and speak their pleasure as men will, who, with a hearty liking for each, suddenly chance to come face to face after years of separation.

‘And so the old dreams have come true at last,’ says Gwynne, thoughtfully, when, arm linked in arm, they are slowly walking on. ‘You are a barrister, and I am a doctor, and a grateful public pines to reward our merit,’ smiling that curious bitter-sweet smile of his.

‘Oh, hang the grateful public!’ replied Mr. Stapylton, who is a young man of energy and purpose, according to his own showing. ‘The public's a beast between a pig and an ass. Give me Art! Humanity! Science!’ With a very big note of exclamation between each noun substantive.

‘Certainly, provided you don't go in for Communism!’

‘Don't you, then?’ much surprised. ‘Don't you believe in the virtues of equality and justice?’

‘On paper, yes. In the flesh, no. I saw rather too much of both in Paris,’ laughing drily.

‘You were in Paris, then, during the revolution?’

‘Yes, and during the siege too. I was a member of the ambulance staff.’

‘At one time I fancied I should like to run over just to see how it all looked!’

‘I don't think you would have been repaid for your trouble, even if you had escaped being shot.’

‘Being shot!’ incredulously; ‘they didn't shoot Englishmen!’

‘Didn't they, though; they nearly shot me, that's all I know,’ with a laugh.

'Bless me! you don't say so. What! put you up against a wall, and——' knitting up his brows and halting in amazement.

'Put me up against a wall, and very politely unbuttoned my coat, and——'

'My dear fellow, how horrible! and was that shield I picked up the thing that saved you?'

'Yes; the red cross on it is the cross of the Geneva Convention; so when I showed it to them they knew I was a surgeon, and let me off. As a rule they didn't maltreat the people who looked after the wounded;' quite calmly, not at all as if he were relating anything wonderful.

'Humph!' and Mr. Stapleton looks him up and down, and takes in the full grandeur of his superb manhood. 'I'll bet anything you never winked an eyelash, you always were such an awfully cool hand, you know.' Then, with a sudden fervour, "By Jove! How glad I am to have met you," and he grasps him lovingly by the arm. 'It seems as if the air was full of Magdalen bells when you're talking, and I always look back on my schooldays as the perfection of happiness, for after our smash came, and the dear old dad died, and my mother got so low and all that, well—it wasn't over cheerful,' with a feeble, melancholy little laugh worth many words.

'Poor old fellow!' They are back in their flannels and striped black and white caps; the sedge-fringed river is behind them; the setting sun picks out the gold upon the barges, and lingers tenderly on Iffley Church; eight trembles on a hundred metal tongues. Now for the scamper home through Christchurch meadow and down Merton Street; 'cut along, youngster! through with you! grins my son;' now E. Stapylton, Esq., barrister-at-law, of the Inner Temple, and better known to the readers of light literature than the stones of Westminster. Ah! the blood runs quicker for such memories, my friends. There are no such suns to set now-a-days.

'Not that I'm howling, you know,' pursues the said barrister-at-law after a bit, flinging up his chin and smiling like a king. 'I've got accustomed to it all now, and take life as it comes. Besides, there's the future; and my belief is that steady work *must* tell at last.'

'Of that, I suppose, there can be no doubt,' replies Gwynne, soberly; 'the nature of the work itself is more what one has to look at.'

'Yes, of course. Well, I'm in the literary line; not entirely fiction—articles, reviews, poems—that sort of thing, you know, but all for an end, a purpose. I want to knock the lead out of the brains of the rising generation before it's had time to settle; to tear up and trample down and generally annihilate Mrs. Grundy and superstition, and——'

waxing violent and lunging out fiercely at nothing in the strength of his right arm.

'Just the same as ever,' laughs Gwynne, 'brimfull of enthusiasm and ideas and romance!' and there is a kind of pity in his tone, though his mouth is smiling.

'I worship the ideal!' loudly, and with emphasis; 'it is always before me, shining as daylight shines at the end of a long, pitch-dark cavern, not as a farthing rushlight to be snuffed out by every gust of popular prejudice and opinion,' contemptuously.

'*Bon!*' much amused at the exceeding briskness and volubility of this hazel-eyed young man, 'we must see more of each other.'

'Rather!' promptly; 'you don't suppose I'm going to lose sight of you again, do you? I'm living down at Surbiton for the present, got some capital lodgings there.'

'Surbiton!' echoes Gwynne curiously, a strange brightness playing in his eyes.

'Yes, no end of a jolly place—river you know, and boating, and lovely scenery; you must come down and see us; my sister's with me now; there's only we two left;' and a sigh, 'but,' clearing up again, 'I really think you'd like it, and if you're fond of music—'

'Thank you,' cuts in Gwynne, incisively, 'I'll come.' Not the slightest hesitation about it, no man of two minds he; simply, he will come.

'But when?' ponders Mr. Stapylton, frowning and meditative. 'Let me see—to-day's Friday; will you come to-morrow? Meet me at Cannon Street, and go down together.'

'Yes,' replies Gwynne; 'that will suit me perfectly. With the exception of a rather ghastly and mortuary work I am seeing through the press, I have nothing in the world to do at present.'

'Then let it be settled so. There's a fast train at half-past four sharp, it will get us down about—' and Mr. Stapylton collects his faculties—'about a quarter past five. Of course I can't offer you anything very superlative in the way of—'

'Am I quite a stranger, then?' A handgrip answers him.

'You are something of a stranger, too,' smiles Stapylton, presently, 'for I don't know what your name is, exactly. Is it Dr. Gwynne, or—'

'No! it's not Dr. Gwynne as yet! but I intend to buy a practice and settle down into harness before long.'

'And marry, I suppose!' and the hazel eyes get dreamy, and the bright face grave, for the shadow of old thoughts is on his mind—the echoes of old words in his ears.

'Not of necessity!' Straightening himself up to his full height,

and skewering himself with his umbrella—the crook under one arm, the point under the other.

‘No!’ eyeing him thoughtfully. ‘No! not of necessity. You don’t seem a very likely fellow to be much troubled with necessity of any kind.’

But Mr. Gwynne looks away—away up the little dingy street, through which flit at intervals dingy wisps of men and women—looks down at a dingy, mangy mongrel, nosing the garbage in the gutter, and holds his peace. He is one of those mortals who know themselves better than others know them.

‘Well ’ after a pause, ‘I’m afraid I must say good-bye now. I’d ask you into my chambers (they’re just round the corner), but I’m overdue already in Pump Court—man wants to see me about a series of Biographical Sketches of the Elizabethan Poets.’

‘And I couldn’t come if you did ask me.’—unskewering himself and examining the sole of one of those great well-made boots; ‘I’m going to get counsel’s opinion on a case of pirated patent. However, I shall be at Cannon Street by half-past four to-morrow, so good-bye.’

A hand shake short, close, and from the heart, and they part, the one going to the right, the other to the left; Edward Stapylton with his mind full of Arnot Gwynne, and forgotten chants, and faces vanished, some into the grave, and some into the outer world,—and deep tremendous organ notes, and shrill, sweet treble pipings of tender throats, now hard and hoarse, and questions to be asked to-morrow which should by rights have been asked to-day, and divers goodly fantasies; and Arnot Gwynne, following a shadowy child-face crowned with a monstrous hat, beneath which sweet grave eyes smile shyly into his, a little face made white with red, and set in pale gold hair—a face of fairyland—a face he cannot forget, cannot escape from, struggle as he will. ‘Am I going mad?’ he thinks, savagely whisking an unoffending bit of orange-peel into the middle of the road. ‘Have I lived free from the folly of fools till I’m thirty to be knocked over, and bound hand and foot by the babyish prettiness of a lawyer’s clerk’s young woman?’ And a great heat rushes up into his face, and a fiercer fire blazes in his eyes,—and he strides on fast and free;—and then a word prints itself upon the air, and that word is Surbiton, and it thrills him as might the memory of some hidden hope, and Mr. Gwynne swings sharply round on his heel and sets his teeth between his sternly compressed lips, for he has lost his way, and doesn’t know in the least where he is, or what is going to become of him,—knows scarcely anything indeed, save that, at this rate, the padded room of a lunatic asylum will soon be his fittest lodging, and a strait waistcoat his most becoming garment.

CHAPTER III.

'PAST HONEY KEEPS THE STARVED LIP COVETOUS.'

'How dreadful!'

'Dreadful—why?'

'I've got no proper evening dress—nothing but that horrid old black silk; and in lodgings it is so——'

'Stuff and nonsense! The idea of being on one's p.'s and q.'s with Gwynne; the kindest, best-hearted, jolliest fellow in the world.'

'Oh, of course!' not without bitterness; 'only you see I've never set eyes on the man in my life!' and a queer grim little smile curves straight red lips.

'All the more reason why you should want to see him;' coolly, in the tone of one having authority. 'Anyhow, he's coming. Pass me the milk, please.'

A thin white wedding-ringed hand pushes the stalwart biscuit china jug across the table.

'And what is he to have to eat? Don't take it all; the best of grandchildren is waiting for his breakfast, arn't you, sweetest of small dogs?'

A touching squeak replies in the affirmative.

'What's he to have to eat?' meditatively, returning the jug and decapitating an egg. 'What's he to have to eat? Well, it's rather a puzzle, isn't it?'

'Suppose we cook you, young man!' holding up a roundabout morsel of curly blackness, decorated with a pert stiff white-tipped tail, four grisly aimless legs, sticking out in all directions, and an intoxicated crimson satin bow; 'boil you and smother you in onions, bless you!' saluting the tip of a cool black nose.

'Instead of kisses!' Chokily. 'No; I don't think that will quite do. Gwynne may have prejudices in spite of all his travels. By the way, you must get him to tell you about his adventures in Paris with the Communists, and how he was going to be shot when they found that shield upon him—the thing I picked up, you know'—stabbing a pat of floating butter, and transferring it to his plate.

'Yes, I know;' languidly—depositing the best of grandchildren on the floor.

'Such a splendid fellow, too! six feet one if he's an inch. He was always straight and well-made, and all that; but I really never thought he'd turn out quite so—so——' peering into the recesses of a sardine box.

'Truly magnificent!' Crumbling bread into a saucer, and laughing satirically.

'Ah!' forking out a fish, 'you wait till you've seen him, that's what you do, my Everilda,—and then perhaps I'll listen to you.'

'Stupid boy,' with crushing dignity, and a pair of very pink cheeks; 'just as if I were some wretched schoolgirl, always sighing and dying, and yearning after my brother's friends.'

'Just as if you weren't,' replies Mr. Stapylton, smiling wickedly. 'I say, don't give that unhappy little beggar all that,' looking at the brimming saucer; 'he'll have a fit.'

'Pouf! *Dites a votre grandmère de, etcetera, etcetera.*' Oh dear, Oh dear!' suddenly waxing earnest. 'I do so wish you hadn't asked him, Ned. It's so jolly here alone with you; but with a great man glaring at one—and wanting to be kow-towed to'—and a pair of sea-water-coloured eyes grow sorely reproachful.

'My dear!' gravely. 'Your sojourn among the fleshpots has not improved your moral nature,—proof of indissoluble connection of mind and matter; in a word, my Eve, you speak selfishly.'

'Do I?' says Miss Everilda, penitently; 'I'm sure I don't mean to,—but if you only knew how I hate strangers—I suppose it's because I've had such a dose of them lately'—and a bitter little laugh.

'Gwynne is not a stranger. Besides, you arn't always so shy. You can make friends with people in railway carriages fast enough;' with a dryness of tone, not wholly destitute of meaning.

'What a shame!' flushing all over her face; 'just catch me telling you anything again.'

'I'll take my chance;' holding out his tea-cup. 'And now to quit the sublime for the ridiculous. I'll leave you a sovereign, and you must fish out something in the way of grub. Miss James'll tell you what'll be best. Ah!' [seeing her sugar-tongs in hand—saccharine matter is abomination to this brisk and peremptory young man] 'pon my word, I think your mysterious hero has walked off with your senses. Come out of the way, Pups. I shall lose the train if I don't look sharp.'

And up he jumps, and away he goes into the passage to change his shabby house-coat for the goodlier garment in which he breasts the tide of life. His hat brushed—not too new a hat by any means—and the essence of the coming feast deposited in a sealskin purse, and himself watched out of sight, Everilda Stapylton shuts the house-door and comes back into the pleasant little sitting-room—a soft woollen neutral-tinted creature with long fringes dangling about her, and broad margins of dead white clasping her throat and wrists, studded with dead gold, a quiet, mouse-like, gentle creature whom it would have been a pity to have killed, if only for the sake of one peremptory young

man—to discuss the varied excellences of fish, flesh, and fowl, of tarts, and creams, and savories, with Ned's landlady, Miss James.

'I'm sure, I hope he won't worry you half as much as he does me,' says Everilda, plaintively, when the *carte* is composed and she is at liberty to make her purchases as quickly as she likes.

'What Miss, the dog?' turning short round tray in hand, and looking hard at the grandchild, who is actively engaged in the demolition of a fag-end of lace curtain.

'The dog, no,' much surprised and not quite pleased at the suggestion; 'this Mr. Gwynne. For my part, I think him a most fearful nuisance. Be quiet, sir.'

Eve picks up the grandchild by the scruff of his neck, tucks him under her arm, makes a queer perverse little face, and walks off upstairs to array herself in the big steeple crowned hat and scarlet shawl, and grey gloves and square-toed buttoned boots, for the benefit of the Surbiton butchers and bakers, and candlestick-makers, and the ultimate refreshment and satisfaction of Ned's unwelcome and sesquipedalian guest.

It is an ideal September morning. People pursue their daily avocations as if they were in love with life; rags take a picturesque grace from the universal beauty; well-to-do, prosperous ladies and gentlemen beam with two-fold effulgence on mankind at large, and to be lavish, rich, free from care, seems the apex of human happiness.

'Free from care!' echoes some one, perhaps. 'Well, rather. Free from care, indeed!' and a significant grunt.

'Back to thy mutton, drivelling pen of a feeble hand! Notably to thy leg of mutton—weighing seven pounds all but two ounces, as tried in the balance by a blue-shirted young man of ruddy countenance, and paid for by a small person of bald and meagre aspect.'

Well! The mutton ticketed, and the fishmonger courteously entertained, and the grocer conferred with, and the greengrocer made deliciously joyful by the purchase of a pot of mignonette, and a bunch of China asters, and a basket of nectarines, and four King William pears, and a plump little melon—Eve is fond of melon herself, being a bit of a Sybarite in her demure way, like most young women;—she takes a stroll up Victoria Road, and has a look at the draper's shop at the corner. What! beautiful two-inch wide lace for twopence three farthings a yard, and warranted to wash! One's vile old black silk might be improved a little by ruffles of that same lace perhaps—any how it couldn't be made worse—and if Ned will ask strange men to dinner,—Eve tightens her hold of the grandchild, who groans the groan of the replete, and boldly fronts the foe.

'Just one shilling, if you please, miss,' remarks that much-beaded

and frilled and fringed being subsequently, sticking a pin in a crisp paper parcel. 'Anythink in the way of gloves to-day, ribands, ties, parasols?'

Eve fancies she would like a blue satin bow very well—but, no! To be decent is necessary, to be smart another thing altogether. No ribands, or gloves, or fineries for me this morning, thank you, *Mademoiselle du Magazin*, and again she airs her red shawl in the sun.

Surbiton is a pretty place. Ned said so to Mr. Gwynne, if you remember, and he was right; but walking alone is dull work, even with a grandchild to stagger after you, and squeak sweetly at your heels. So she goes straight back to the said Ned's cosy little home. Ah! how delicious the sense of security, of ease, of perfect freedom to live one's own life according to one's own fashion, unknown to men, to women, to every one in the world save a Ned, a grandchild, a good, kind, clever Miss James, who makes one the nicest custard pudding in the world for one's luncheon,—at Wrentham one seemed to subsist on sawdust and shavings, with a pinch of glue and a sprinkle of turpentine,—and who admires one's way of making ruffles, and decking out fruit dishes, and arranging bouquets for the centre of dinner-tables, and insinuates that one is the most truly delightful young person of her acquaintance, after a fashion that—Well, it is pleasant to be liked and petted and made a fuss over—and you'd like it too, Mr. Grumblegrumper, if only anybody could be found mean and mendacious enough to give you a chance. And then the songs and nocturnes of Chopin come out of their dark corner, and Eve plays herself into Dreamland. She is a rare musician, this little grave-faced girl with the seawater-coloured eyes, and her cheeks crimson to the tint of the Virginian creeper tendril swaying lazily in and out of the window in the soft south breeze, and her lips part over the small, divided teeth, in a smile half-sad, half-glad—and the notes sing themselves to sleep—and—and—

'Why! what o'clock is it?' waking up with a start and a shiver. Yes, a shiver—the world feels cold as an empty house.

'It's five, miss! You didn't ring, so I brought you a cup of tea without waiting, and I've put a can of hot water in your room.'

Only half-an-hour to spare, then, and those ruffles to be fought with and subdued. Never mind. Leisurely she drinks her tea, leisurely she dawdles through her dressing. Then, when she is quite ready, and possessed of a cool conviction that in no possible manner could her appearance be improved, being always a somewhat feeble apology for a woman, she pats down an ebullient end of the grandchild's brand-new blue bow, specially designed for the occasion, composes

him in a striking attitude over her left arm, and leaves her room for the landing.

Hark! voices downstairs; some one growling away on lower C.

Eve draws up her small white throat. She is not positively shy. Lady Slade's companion seldom is, and yet she goes downstairs very slowly—very, very, very, slowly—and as she gets to the three last steps 'Come along!' exclaims Ned, bursting out of the dining-room—his dear cheery old face running over with smiles and good humour and enjoyment. 'Come along! I've just been telling Gwynne all about your railway adventure the other day and the mystic hero. This is my sister Eve, Gwynne, baptised Everilda,' and he walks her into the room with his arm about her waist.

And Eve stands stock still and stares, for this Gwynne is the great grey man.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE SWEET THAN SHAPEN MUSIC IS.

AND the great grey man stares too; stares with puzzled astonished eyes down from the ceiling, it seems, to Miss Stapylton. He is standing with his back against the mantelpiece, and his hands in his pockets, and the whole room seems full to overflowing of him.

But it is not in the nature of things that two sane members of society should keep on glowering dumbly at each other like this.

Given a man and a woman in circumstances requiring presence of mind, which of the two will develop that admirable faculty first?

The man!

Be this maxim incontrovertible or not, certain it is that Gwynne's lips are the first to smile. Gwynne's right hand the first to offer itself. Gwynne the first to speak.

And what does she do? why! she looks at the carpet, gets scarlet, mumbles something of no particular meaning, and plumps down upon the sofa with a bump which jerks the grandchild nose-downwards into her lap.

'Hulloa!' exclaims Ned—not a little amazed at his sister's want of manners, and rather vexed, to tell the truth. He has so made up his mind that she shall admire Gwynne, and that Gwynne shall admire her. 'You'll break the poor little beggar's neck if you don't take care. This is the grandchild, Gwynne,' seizing him up by the skin of his back, and exhibiting him *in conspectu omnium*. Eve thinks he looks like those exceeding dejected and paralytic golden sheep, which you may see strung up by their middles on a rural publican's sign-post now and then.

'The grandchild!' echoes Mr. Gwynne, curiously. 'These are odd people, these Stapyltons, what with their clipped heads, and super-

abundant ruffles, and democratic rationalistic revolutionising theories [Ned has been hitting out at his pet dummies in the train, and their four-legged descendants.] Your grandchild?' 'No!' says Eve, jumping up and snatching him out of his tormentor's clutches—'mine!' and her face is ruddier than the cherry. 'I am the mother of his parents.'

'To make matters a trifle clearer to the ordinary comprehension,' observes Ned drily, 'we used to have a very handsome pair of retrievers, but when bread and cheese became a difficulty, I sold them both to a friend of mine, and this is one of the last litter of pups.'

'Ah!' sighs Eve, her eyes out of window, seeing two dear, beautiful black faces in the evergreens. 'I thought my heart must break when I said good-bye to the Cockaloo.'

'Which was that?' inquires Gwynne, deliberately seating himself beside her and stretching out one long grey leg half across the hearth-rug. 'The papa?'

'Yes,' she says, and she smiles round at him slowly out of her great shy eyes, just as the witch smiled who led him such a dance only yesterday afternoon; 'he was my darling, my best of dogs. I could never be so fond of anything again as I was of him!'

'Oh yes, you could,' laughs Ned; 'none of your hypocrisy, Miss Everilda. Recollect the mystic hero, Black-farouche—brutal. A Hercules with the temper of a Nero, tearing railway trains in pieces as more moderate mortals tear a sheet of paper or Lord Shaftesbury's arguments. Eating fire, and spitting it out again in the form of locomotives. God bless me! I think I see him now; nice sort of brother-in-law—eh, Gwynne?' and Ned catches himself by the knees, and roars with laughter, and Gwynne roars, too; and Eve sits very bolt upright and does the disembodied spirit by its native hearth.

'Shall I take off the covers, sir?'

The filleted soles are good, and the leg of mutton is roasted to a turn, and the wonderful pyramid of asters reared in the middle of the table—purple, and pink, and creamy white—round off awkward corners, and do to gaze at vacuously in the pauses of the conversation.

For there are pauses.

You cannot dream of a person for three nights and two days—the said person being as remote from your individual sphere as Arcturus is from Orion—and then suddenly find yourself eating your daily bread in their company, and talk quite as glibly of outside life, as you would were the young woman dispensing the potatoes Jones' legal impediment, or the man who helps you to sherry, dear Flo's bridegroom elect.

Nature will have her way now and then, and nature has her way

now in tying the tongues of Eve Stapylton and Arnot Gwynne, as they thus sit at meat together.

Not that they are entirely silent. Eve has seen too much of the Wrentham world, and Arnot too much of the great wide world for that. No; they do talk about music, and new plays, and new books. There is a spice of Darwinism in the mental structure of Mr. Gwynne, little as he possesses in common with the parent ape. This I notice to be a not uncommon accident; but in all they say, there is a sort of reference to things unguessed, undreamed of by poor sober Ned, plodding away at his turnips and gravy, and heavy feed generally; and now and then their eyes will meet, not very often; they are shy of looking at each other, these two who have faced death together, in a way scarcely calculated to materially assist in the elaboration of polite verbiage.

Dinner over, and the dessert on the table, with a bottle of good Bordeaux,—well, the bottle of good Bordeaux on the table,—it becomes a question, '*que faire?*'

'Sing us a song, Eve?' says Ned.

She is obedient. For the last twelve months of her life she has lived at the beck and call of stony-eyed strangers; she is not likely to make 'ifs' and 'ands' about doing the bidding of the one man she loves best in the world. So she goes and sings, and the song she sings is Mendelssohn's 'Parting,' and then she plays that dreamiest of Chopin's waltzes, the one in A minor, and that most exquisite of Chopin's nocturnes, No. 2 of the three called 'Murmures de la Seine,' and then—

'Can't one go for a walk?' says Gwynne, in a low, desireful voice.

Ned is sound asleep on the highly calendered chintz sofa, the grandchild curled up in his lap. Oh, supinest, most intolerably dull of brothers.

Eve sits silent, staring at the black and white ivories of the keyboard.

'Come!' and he gets between her and the twilight.

A moment or two of hesitating. To be out with him in the free air, away from listening ears, to have his words, yes, an' they be but the very poorest words in the English language—to have these words of his all for one's own hearing, to have him all to one's self just for a little while. She looks round at Ned, she looks up at Gwynne, and she gets up, and goes away.

Five minutes, he, with his keen, bright eyes, brighter than usual, piercing the greys of the dusk, and watching Fate, and down she comes in the too big hat and the scarlet shawl.

It is quite wonderful this going out for a quiet evening walk with the man whom she has dreamed of, and preached about to the grand-

child for days. It is quite wonderful, I say, and she knows it to be so. The door closes slowly behind them. They walk away down the dim street, down the dim lane, silently, solemnly, as might an affianced pair mated against their wills.

Thus do they reach the deserted, shadow-haunted esplanade, with the lights of Kingston Bridge glittering tremulously in the water, and the tender river ripples yellowing in the feeble rays of the newly-risen moon, rounder by an inch than when she last shone on them together. And then Gwynne turns himself about, and lays his hand upon a small black arm, and says, 'Eve, will you be my wife?'

And she says nothing; but she looks at him—not smilingly, quite gravely, rather—those shy, sweet, tender eyes of hers, and she draws a little nearer to him, and thus these twain become one flesh.

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'Ned!' with a soft hand about his neck, and a warm cheek pressed close to his. 'It is the mystic hero after all!'

* * * * *

One moment! In your ear,—so——

They're to be married on the 30th of this month, Eve's eighteenth birthday.

THE DRAMA.

ANCIENT poetry is to modern what Apollo is to 'Mrs. Crawley's husband.' That tall and powerful lifeguardsman was important only in relation to little Becky Sharpe. In classic times man and woman were regarded as twin hemispheres of one star. In this age woman is the sun and man the satellite. The coarse Plato and the stolid Aristotle believed poetry to be independent of sex. But our enlightened judgment knows better. All the he's in the Greek anthology have, in the process of translation, been very sensibly twisted into she's. Shakespeare's sonnets have been addressed—not, indeed, by the poet, but by his commentators—to a woman. 'In Memoriam,' no doubt, will be interpreted into a tribute to some interesting female beauty, when the critics of the future mend their pens. Most of our poets write of nothing else but 'the sex.' The sex is civilization. Petticoats are almost a synonym for the fine arts. Hence chirp, hence coo, hence chirrup, and hence chepe such singers as the world has never seen. Mr. Morris produces effeminate verses by the ream. There was once a musician—I forget his name—who could never compose without a brace of cats, one purring on each shoulder. The twittering versiculets of the chatty bard suggest a thimble on each of his fingers and thumbs. Some lyrists refresh their parched inspiration with port in tumblers. The buzzing minstrel under consideration gives one the idea of fortifying himself by rummaging a lady's workbox.

Morris is the mighty Protagonist on the arena of gush.

Richards, on the other hand, writes muscular poetry.

Nothing need here be said by me about his 'Cromwell,' except that the general verdict upon it is, 'dramatically good, poetically excellent, scenically poor, histrionically vile.'

Never was such a brilliant play so penuriously got up, and so abominably acted. The papers who first abused it, have, like the *Standard*, hungrily eaten their own words, but, nevertheless, sailed off with flying colours, and pointed to its success, 'As we always pre-

dicted,' &c. Acted and mounted elsewhere more as it deserves to be, Cromwell will be, no doubt, far more popular even than now.

The *Spectator* and the *Saturday Review* in substance both say, 'The workings of Cromwell's conscience, after the King's death, are various and powerful.'

The *Saturday Review*, not generally given to a blind hysterical admiration of poetry, nevertheless waxes enthusiastic over such passages as—

Could'st thou have reigned, not crushing English hearts
With fierce compression of thine iron sway
Cromwell had lived, contented and unknown,
To teach his children, loyalty and faith,
Sacred and simple, as the grass-grown mound
That should have pressed more lightly on his bones
Than ever greatness on his wearied spirit.

We also learn from the sharpest and most caustic of Reviews that 'It would be difficult to state the case of the Regicide more forcibly than in these lines'—

Oh, believe
By far the nobler half of English hearts
Will land you, when long centuries have nursed
The troubles of these frantic times to rest.
Great acts alone shall be, when years have passed,
The landmark of men's thoughts, who then shall see
In these events that shake the world with awe,
But a great subject, and a hase bad king,
Interpreted aright.

Now, wholly passing from the dramatic aspect of the play, it is, in these days of lyrical dearth, a consolation to think that, as to its poetic merits, throughout a singularly wide range of criticism there has been only one opinion. The tragedy will refresh the interest of the public in the previous inspirations of the poet.

I leave the following stanzas of the 'Medea' to the unbiassed judgment of the reader:—

Man walks in fear, and sleeps in mystery—
All that our senses feed on, only seems—
Stretched o'er the door-still of Eternity
Our dreams are wakening, and our wakening dreams.

The sad experience of our riper age,
A shadow lengthening, as the sun goes down;
Nature herself, for every open page,
Some leaf forbidden folds with mystic frown.

Between the chalk-marks of a childish game,
 Our footsteps stray, or stumble, reel or dance ;
 A step to Folly, or a step to Fame,
 Planted 'mid graves—the mocking umpire Chance.

Presentiments and strange antipathies
 Fantastic trip the heels of sober thought ;
 Quaint elves trim reason's eccentricities,
 Pluck frowning wisdom by the beard unsought.

Unsought, as omens on life's daily road
 That only opens to our ownward tread ;
 Whereon each, ever, sinks with weary load—
 His brief stage o'er—the rest untravelled.

Lo ! in the rustling of a wind-blown reed
 A whisper from the Deluge haunts the brain ;
 And, in the snorting of impatient steed,
 A message from Pharsalia's battle-plain.

And in all harmonies a note to link
 Some splendid memory, some golden crown
 Of martyrdom, some Curtius on the brink
 Of glory, with our day-dreams of renown ;

And, from the tremor of the moonlit sea,
 A vague remembrance, like a sail afar,
 Glides stretching tow'ards the blue infinity,
 Where in Heaven's fleet rides every new-launched star ;

Mingled with sweet emotion, saddest thought,
 Quicker than star or sunbeam to return
 The path it travels, with strange yearnings fraught,
 And solemn transports that within us burn.

Perchance in truth, though mystic as a dream
 Through grains or worlds, of shifting sand called Time ;
 Perchance, through farthest spheres that flashing stream,
 We hear dim echoes of a distant chime.

The perfumes of a garden after rain,
 A sunset's funeral grandeurs in the west,
 Odours of past existence breathe again,
 Visions of drowned Atlantis wake from rest.

And, from a spot ne'er seen in life before,
 Veiled Recollection with averted face,
 Rises, as though our footsteps lingered o'er
 Some half-familiar childhood-trodden place.

Out of these stanzas Mr. Morris could weave a million with the greatest ease. His is a Promised Land of milk and—water, a perpetual motion of metrical nothings, an insipidity of happy prattle that, like the darkness of Egypt, may be felt, a brilliant long-windedness

which amounts absolutely to the dignity of a phenomenon. But it is no more my business, here, at all events, to decry Morris than it is to exalt Richards. I wish that Morris would study such passages as the following in Richards' 'Croesus':—

O man! how art thou fooled by man who aches,
And coughs, and hopes, and dreams, e'en as thyself
To run thus eagerly to stare and see
How he can strut in gewgaw impotence
And idle show beneath the modest sun
That ever beams the same, or hides himself
In stern magnificence of cloudy robe,
And red with Heaven's blushes. Man, proud man,
Too apt forgets how much a crownéd skull
Blanched by the winds is like unto the rest,
Nor checks the worm that stirs it, with a frown
More sudden than its rayless brotherhood;
Smooth as a slave's, and as a cobbler's round—
Your monarch's molars oft'ner wanting found.

Perhaps one reason why Richards has so much more verve than most of our effeminate pipers, is that, with the possible exception of George Augustus Sala, he is about the most prolific journalist of the day. The man who writes twenty leaders a week is not likely to err on the side of ætherial nothingness. And I can sympathise with the brilliant—for after all so versatile a man must be a brilliant-genius when at the end of his *Religio animæ* he cries.

O Nature! thou measureless giver
Of blessings, crime-tortured to wrong;
If I've rambled with Thee by life's river,
And snatched but wild blossoms of song.

They are nearer to Him who created,
They are dearer to me who adore;
Go forth, ye frail blossoms, though fated,
Ye belong to my soul, evermore.

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